

SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY

**POPULATION DRAIN:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON MIGRATION
DEVELOPMENT ON THE CASE OF ERITREAN REFUGEES IN
NORWAY**

**MASTER'S THESIS IN GLOBAL STUDY
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late grandfather Tsegay Bokresion and to my grandmother Roma Tesfamariam. They have immensely invested in me, without their care and support, I would not have been where I am today. I am always greatly indebted to their deeds.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMA	-----	British Military Administration
ELF	-----	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLF	-----	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EU	-----	European Union
GoE	-----	Government of Eritrea
IMDI	-----	Integrerings og Mangfoldsdirektoratet
NSD	-----	Norwegian Social Science Data Service Department
PFDJ	-----	Peoples' Front for Democracy and Justice
PTSD	-----	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
SSB	-----	Norwegian Statistics Bureau
TPLF	-----	Tigrean People's Liberation Front
UDI	-----	Utlendingsdirektoratet
UNHCR	-----	United Nations High-Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	-----	United Nations Children's Fund
YPFDJ	-----	Young People's Front for Democracy and Justice

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations estimates that 5,000 Eritreans leave their country every month as refugees. The Wall Street Journal recently referred to Eritrea as one of the "world's fastest-emptying nations." Many of them are young men, and *researchers* (Italics not mine) on the ground have noted that the ages of Eritrean refugees have gotten progressively younger, suggesting that they are leaving before conscription.¹

The Washington Post, April 2016

Migration research has mainly been focused on migration processes. As a result, most existing migration theories do not provide very specific concepts into the nature of migration effects on development in sending societies. Over the last four decades, migration impact on the development of migrant-sending countries has been the subject of constant and at times heated debate. From this debate, one can mainly distinguish two radically opposed methods, which is “balanced growth” versus “asymmetric development” theories. These differing views are often referred as “migration optimists” and “migration pessimists”. However, this debate has developed rather separately from the theoretical debate on the causes of migration. And this demonstrates, why the debate on migration and development has stalled, somehow undertheorized and mostly disconnected from more general debates.

Examining the role of Eritrean refugees/immigrants in Norway in light of the homeland development sheds some light on the unsettled migration development debate. The study also contributes in broadening our theoretical knowledge on the role of refugee’s remittance in homeland development deliberations, an area largely unstudied. One other distinctive aspect of this research is the disposition on the migration development discourse linking integration with homeland development. Using samples, discussions are presented on how lack of integration could be problematic for both receiving and sending states.

According to the Norwegian Statistics Bureau (SSB), in 2016 the overall number of Eritrean Norwegians including children born to Eritrean parents stands at 17,592. Out of this number 3,109

¹ Max Bearak, “Hundreds of thousands have fled this country. This ghastly massacre is a reminder why”; available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/04/13/a-ghastly-massacre-in-eritrea-is-a-reminder-of-why-so-many-are-fleeing/>; site accessed 18 April 2016.

are Norwegians born to Eritrean parents, so-called second generation immigrants.² From 2007 up to 2015, UDI statistics indicates 18,492 Eritreans claimed asylum in Norway.³ As the naturalization process could take more than eight years, those still living with a refugee status, and those resettled via family reunion, over the last seven years are excluded from the statistics. In this case, if we mathematically sum-up the numbers, presumably more than 35,000 Eritreans and Norwegians with Eritrean descent currently live in Norway.

Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter discusses on the general introduction of the thesis. The second chapter deals with methodological issues in conducting the research. In the third chapter relevant theoretical literature on migration, homeland development and migration in light of poverty and conflict are reviewed. In the fourth chapter, relevant research on the background history to the Eritrean migration phenomena and Eritrean diaspora's role in the homeland development endeavors are elaborated.

In the fifth chapter, discussions of migration in light of pull and push migration models and integration with the host society are presented. In the sixth chapter an analysis of the findings on the understanding and contribution of Eritrean refugees in Norway in the homeland development is surveyed. In the seventh chapter results of the main research findings are presented with a final reflection of the thesis.

The State of Migration in Europe

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, marked the beginning of an end to the cold war period. Eventually, many European countries demolished borders, and the dream of borderless Europe materialized. However, a quarter of a century later, a wave of refugees escaping wars from the Middle East and Africa posed a new challenge, as they flood on Europe's doorstep, prompting to stretch fences back again.

From Athens to Berlin, from Rome to Stockholm, waves of asylum seekers roamed on the streets. Europeans watched live on TV screen, a scene of utter human suffering, reminiscent of Second-World-War. In the meantime, across Europe, Islamic terrorist attack targeting civilians mounted, killing hundreds and some European cities looked like war-zones, with armed soldiers

² Statistics Norway, "Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents;" available at <https://www.ssb.no/statistikkbanken/SelectTable/hovedtabellHjem.asp?KortNavnWeb=innvbef&CMSSubjectArea=befolkning&StatVariant=&PLanguage=1&checked=true>; site accessed 31 March 2016.

³ UDI, "Asylsøknader etter statsborgerskap og år (2007-2014)"; available at <https://www.udi.no/statistikk-og-analyse/statistikk/asylsoknader-etter-statsborgerskap-og-ar-2007-2014/>; site accessed 24 April 2016

patrolling streets become the norm. European open-door humanitarian tradition faced a real test, with right wing-parties using the statuesque gained more voters across Germany, France and Sweden. The Germans were exceptional in their rapid response, sheltering more than one million refugees in 2015 alone, mostly Syrian refugees escaping civil-war.

Amidst the growing number of refugees coming to Europe seeking refuge, countries such as Denmark, Sweden and Norway worried by the influx rushed to tighten their borders, jeopardizing the notion of borderless Europe.⁴ In the Schengen area (European Union), people travel without visa requirement. The bloc terminated checks at most internal borders in 1995, and now 26 nations are part of the passport-free Schengen area, the free movement of people across borders.⁵ Like terrorism, illegal migration has brought European countries to a standstill, struggling to balance humanitarianism with security.

Migration ‘Exodus’ of Eritreans

In 2015, more than one million refugees sought asylum in the European Union, a record number of asylum application after the Second World-War. While majority of the asylum seekers were Syrians, Eritreans were the largest group relative to the population size of the country, which roughly stands at 5.5 million.⁶ Norway is among the most popular destination for Eritrean asylum seekers. In 2015, the overall asylum application in Norway stood at 31,145, of whom almost three thousand were Eritreans.⁷

The UNHCR estimates that about 5,000 Eritreans flee the country each month and that as of mid-2014, more than 313,000 Eritreans, over 5 percent of the population have fled the country.⁸

The current refugee influx started after the end of the border war with Ethiopia. In may 1998 war broke out between Eritrea and Ethiopia, after both countries contested the disputed border

⁴ Al Jazeera and Agencies, “Denmark and Sweden tighten border controls;” available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/denmark-sweden-tighten-border-control-160104140849704.html>; site accessed 05 February 2016.

⁵ Jonathan Stearns and Jonathan Tirone, “Europe’s Refugee Crisis;” available at <http://www.bloombergvew.com/quicktake/europe-refugees>; site accessed 09 February 2016.

⁶ Matina Stevis and Joe Parkinson, “Thousands Flee Isolated Eritrea to Escape Life of Conscription and Poverty,” Wall Street Journal; available at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/eritreans-flee-conscription-and-poverty-adding-to-the-migrant-crisis-in-europe-1445391364>; site accessed 05 February 2016.

⁷ Norwegian Immigration Department, “Asylum Decisions by Citizenship and Outcome (2015),” available at <https://www.udi.no/statistikk-og-analyse/statistikk/asylvedtak-etter-statsborgerskap-og-utfall-2015/>; site accessed 05 February 2016.

⁸ Human Rights Watch, “World Report 2015: Eritrea”; available at <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/eritrea>; site accessed 09 February 2016.

town of Badme. The war continued for three years (1998-2000) costing the lives of more than one hundred thousand from both sides and ended with the signing of the Algiers agreement in December 2000.⁹

Soon after the end of the border conflict with Ethiopia, senior Eritrean government officials and other high ranking military leaders demanded political reform and the establishment of a constitutional government. In September 2001, one week after the terrorist attack in New York, the president jailed all the reformists. Ever since then, none of them were put on trial, and no one knows their whereabouts, according to some eyewitness testimonies, most of them are presumed dead.¹⁰

Human Rights Watch, blamed the President of the country Isaias Afewerki for the lack of political reform and human rights violations in its 2014 annual country report.

Eritrea's dismal human rights situation, exacerbated by indefinite military conscription, is causing thousands of Eritreans to flee their country every month. In early 2014, President Isaias Afewerki confirmed his lack of interest in an open society, stating: "[I]f there is anyone who thinks there will be democracy or [a] multiparty system in this country ... then that person can think of such things in another world."¹¹

The lack of freedom and the institutionalization of indefinite military service for all nationals beyond the age of 18 is forcing many Eritrean youths to flee the country and seek refuge in neighboring countries mainly Ethiopia and Sudan. Many of them continue their journey to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea and hundreds of them die in the process. Others attempt to reach Israel via the Sinai desert¹². If kidnaped by the smugglers had to pay ransom from 30,000 to 40,000 US dollars and this money is often paid by family members in the West.¹³

⁹ United Nations, "Security Council Welcomes Peace Agreement Between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Urges Full, Expeditious Cooperation with United Nations Mission"; available at <http://www.un.org/press/en/2001/sc7011.doc.htm>; site accessed 05 February 2016.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Eritrea: Free Political Prisoners Ten Years On;" available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/09/22/eritrea-free-political-prisoners-10-years>, site accessed 09 February 2016.

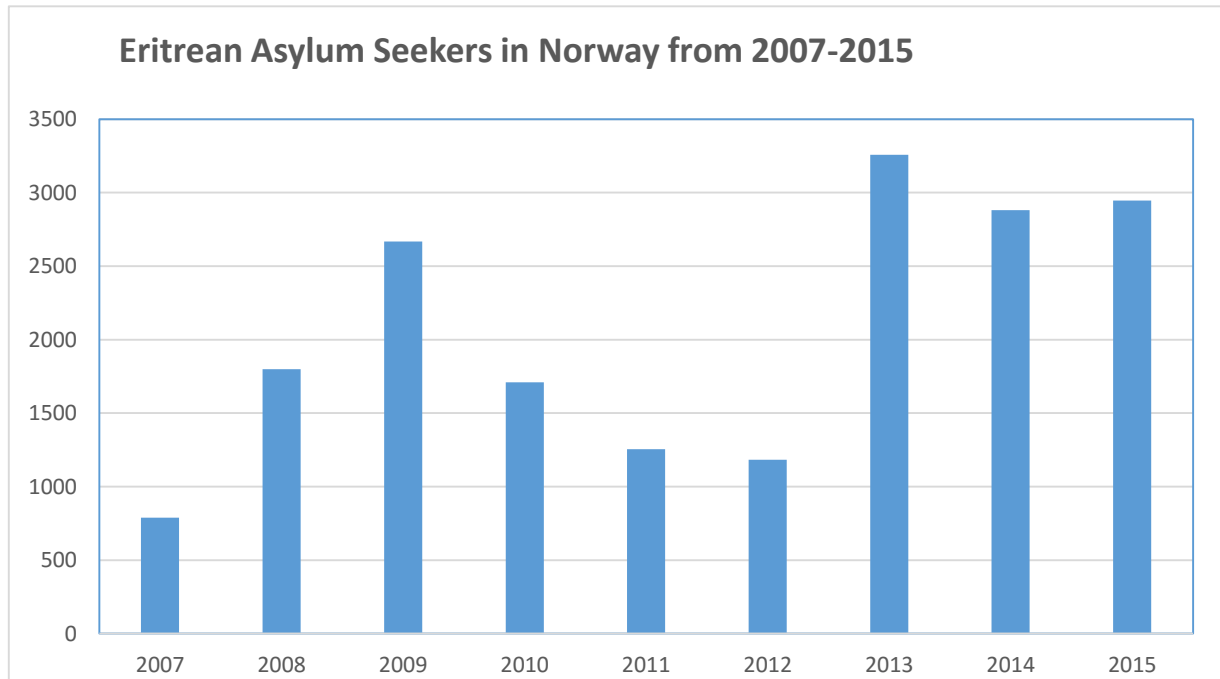
¹¹ Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2015: Eritrea".

¹² Halted at the moment, after Israel built a border fence on the Sinai Desert.

¹³ Suzette Standing, "Close the Torture House in the Sinai and Egypt"; available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/suzette-standing/close-the-torture-houses-_b_4945890.html; site accessed 10 February 2016.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report, as of 2014 more than 216,000 Eritrean refugees sheltered in Ethiopia and Sudan alone.¹⁴ In the same year, 37,000 Eritrean sought asylum in Europe, and most asylum requests were registered in Sweden (9,531), Germany, (9,362) Switzerland (5,652), the Netherlands (4,113) and Norway (2882).

Figure 1 source UDI¹⁵



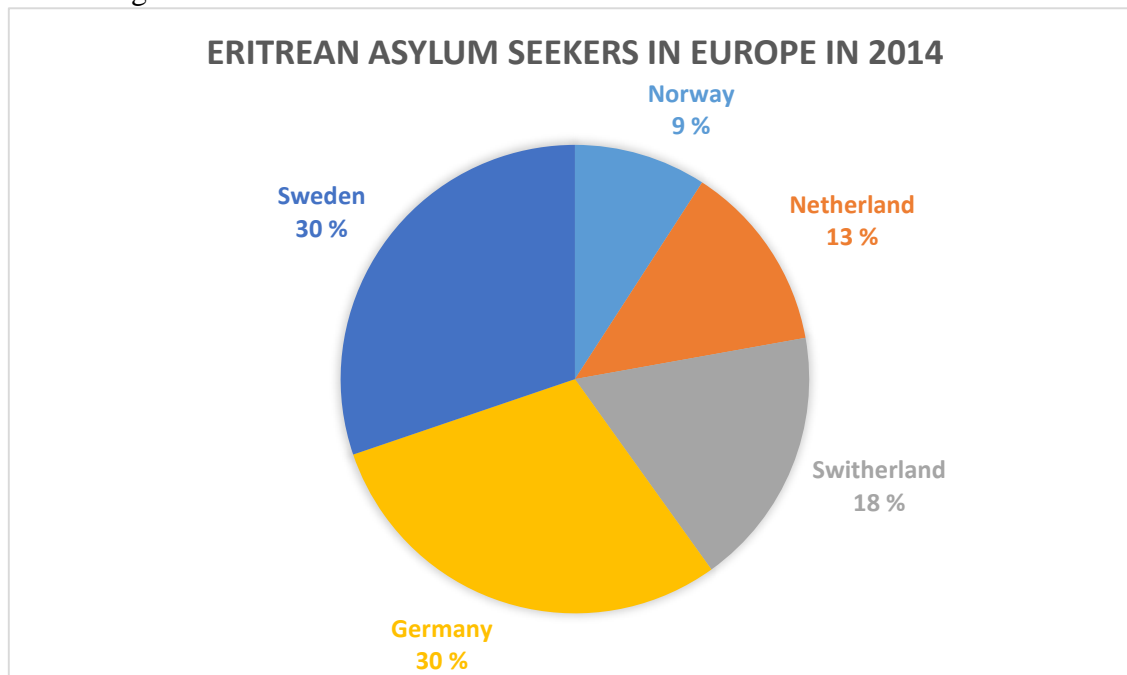
And in 2015 the number of Eritreans seeking asylum in Norway slightly increased to 2947, making Eritreans the second largest group after Syrians.¹⁶

¹⁴ UNHCR, “Number of Eritreans seeking asylum in Europe soars over figures for last year,” available at <http://www.unhcr.org/546606286.html>; site accessed 09 February 2016.

¹⁵ UDI, “Asylsøknader etter statsborgerskap og år (2007-2014)”.

¹⁶ Norwegian Immigration Department, “Asylum Decisions by Citizenship and Outcome (2015)”.

Figure 1: Source UNHCR¹⁷



Background to Norway Eritrea Relations

The initial contact between Eritrea and Norway dates back as far as 1949, when Norway became one of the five countries selected by the United Nations to determine the fate of Eritrea. This was after the defeat of the Italians by the British, who colonized the country for half a century from 1890–1941. Christine Smith-Simonsen, a Norwegian researcher on Eritrea states, the Norwegian delegation supported the proposal for Eritrea to join with its southern neighbor Ethiopia under federal arrangement.¹⁸

In the late 1970s, Eritrean liberation movement came in contact with Norwegian actors within the political left and various humanitarian organizations. Eventually, relationships developed and networks established at several levels, primarily within civil society in relation to NGOs and solidarity associations. After independence of Eritrea in 1993, Eritrea was one of Norway's main aid recipient countries. However, the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia from 1998

¹⁷ UNHCR, "Number of Eritreans seeking asylum in Europe soars over figures for last year".

¹⁸ Christine Smith-Simonse, "Eritrea I våre hjerter?: En studie av Norske Relasjoner til Eritrea" (Tromsø: University of Tromsø, 2006), 5.

to 2000 and the subsequent political developments in Eritrea led to the downgrading of cooperation after 2002.¹⁹

The involvement by the Norwegian government was the result of the work of voluntary organizations and individuals and the Eritrean expatriate community. Eritrean immigrants succeeded in navigating potential donors and made contacts within key political circles in the West. Smith-Simonsen argues, Scandinavian countries in general, particularly Norway, appeared attractive because of the short distance between the state and civil society.²⁰

Research Problem

Often local media in Norway report inter-communal tension among Eritrean diaspora community, during cultural evenings.²¹ Homeland political issues is claimed as the main reason for the tension and division. Some members of the Eritrean diaspora community fundraise in the name of homeland development, others strongly oppose them, accusing their contribution would strengthen the grip of power by the ‘totalitarian government’.

Migration development nexus focus on migrants’ remittance role in generating development in the least developing countries (LCD), often where migrants come from.²² However, the migration development debate is greatly focused on the case of economic migrants, giving little attention on the implication of remittance in the case of refugee-producing countries. My subject of interest is mainly focused on figuring out the significance of Eritrean diaspora remittance in driving homeland development in the absence of a democratic government.

My impression is that, human traffickers and neighboring countries are reaping the benefits of hard currency sent by Eritrean diaspora, where hundreds of thousands live as refugees. These refugees mainly depend on the assistance of their close relatives mostly residing in the western world. The research would attempt to address, how this persistent dependence, affects Eritrean diaspora’s socio-economic life in Norway.

¹⁹ Ibid., 5.

²⁰ Ibid., v.

²¹ Ina Gundersen, «Ap vil nekte kommunal utleie til eritreiske foreninger»; available at <http://www.aftenbladet.no/nyheter/lokalt/stavanger/Ap-vil-nekte-kommunal-utleie-til-eritreiske-foreninger-3831728.html>; site accessed 12 April 2016.

²² Nina Glick Schiller and Thomas Faist, *Migration, Development and Transnationalization: A Critical Stance* (United States: Berghahn Books, 2010), 7.

As anti-asylum seekers rhetoric is growing across Europe, Norwegian politicians are also instituting tough migrations laws, in an effort of deterring others. One fear factor is the growing pessimism on the prospect of integration and financial burden. Likewise, some main stream medias and politicians talk of refugees or immigrants; in a negative sense or address the issue of refugee 'influx' with skepticism.²³ In this regard, attempts are made to explore the challenges and opportunities Eritrean immigrants face in the process of integration, and this will enable me to discuss the implications of integration for homeland development.

Research Questions

The research addresses issues of migration and development with a particular emphasis on political and economic transnational activity, and its influence on the social relations in the Eritreans community. The main research question is finding the role of Eritrean refugees in Norway for the homeland-development. These are some of the sub-questions:

- What are the opportunities and challenges for Eritrean refugees in working together for the homeland-development?
- What challenges do Eritrean refugees face in sending remittance, and who are the main beneficiaries?
- What are the causes of Eritrean mass-migration and why they choose to come to Norway?
- What are the relationships between integration and homeland-development?

Significance of the Study

My interest in the topic emanates from my personal experience, as a refugee in Norway, seen fellow compatriots abandoning the country in droves. In the process spend thousands of US dollars, money acquired from close or distant relatives often residents of Western Countries. After arriving in the West, they remain preoccupied with the deteriorating socio-economic and political developments in the homeland. They often resort to smuggle-out remaining family members to the west remitting thousands of dollars, and in doing so consciously or otherwise deplete the nations human resource. There seems to be a constant cycle of migration, i.e. in this case migration accelerating further migration. How could this migration 'influx' affect Eritrea, both in the short and long-term requires objective scrutiny. Therefore, in reducing the migration flow, understanding the root causes of

²³ Nilas Johnsen, "Det frykter PST ved Asylstrømmen til Norge", VG Newspaper; available at <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/terrorangrepene-i-paris/dette-frykter-pst-ved-asylstroemmen-til-norge/a/23562285/>; site accessed 20 November 2015.

Eritrean migration is paramount, before dealing with its remedies. It could also contribute in creating awareness about the long-term risks for the homeland and short-term challenges for the receiving state. In this case, this research could help to facilitate diaspora's constructive and informed engagement with the homeland, in eventually reducing the flow of migration, perhaps in generating a reverse migration at some point in the future.

In addition, in a state of closed legal avenues of migration for refugees, Eritrean diasporas are desperately resorting to illegal migration using traffickers in resettling fellow family members. Western governments continue to impose strict migration regulations, by strengthening asylum and visa requirements, especially to people from developing countries. The more legal avenues of migration get closed, the more traffickers seem to stand to benefit asking exorbitant amount of money, leading asylum seekers into taking dangerous journeys. In this case, the research could contribute to the contemporary migration debate. It could also be useful for policy makers, for individual actors and institutions working with refugees.

Limitations of the Study

Eritrean government recognizes nine ethnic groups, and Tigrigna ethnic group counts for almost half of the entire population. My respondents were predominantly members one ethnic group i.e. Tigrigna. In addition, Eritrea is demographically divided between half Muslim and half Christian and all my informants were Christians. I made some attempts to include Muslim informants but was unsuccessful.

The study is mainly based on interviews with eight Eritrean immigrants/refugees, and two Norwegians working with Eritrean refugees and on personal observations. Most of my Eritrean informants were active opponents of the government, while some of them were not.

The other limitation is my Eritrean nationality and journalistic background. My nationality could have some unintended bias on the research. In addition, I worked as a journalist in Eritrea both for the private and state media. After I left my country in 2007, I wrote some critical articles against the government. In this case, my anti-homeland government political stance proved to be a challenge in interviewing those who support. For this reason, hardcore Eritrean government supporters are excluded. But, some of my informants were recently pro-government supporters, therefore, attempts are made to include both parties.

Definition of key Terms

The following concepts and terms are used in the research and their meaning is elaborated:

- **Asylum seeker:** an asylum-seeker is someone who says he or she is a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated.²⁴
- **Diaspora:** a group of people who live outside the area in which they had lived for a long time or in which their ancestors lived.²⁵
- **Immigrant:** a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.²⁶
- **Integration:** the process by which immigrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups.²⁷
- **Naturalized citizen:** Legal process by which a citizen of one country becomes a citizen of another. It generally requires that the person be staying in the adopted country for a specified minimum period.²⁸
- **Refugee:** The 1951 Refugee Convention spells out that a refugee is someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."²⁹
- **Transnationalism:** refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation state.³⁰

²⁴ UNHCR, "Asylum Seeker," available at <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c137.html>; site accessed 02 April 2016.

²⁵ Meriam-Webster, "Diaspora" available at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diaspora>; site accessed 07 February 2016.

²⁶ Oxford Dictionaries, "Immigrant," available at <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/immigrant>; site accessed 07 February 2016.

²⁷ Rinus Penninx, "Integration: The Role of Communities, Institutions, and the State," Migration Policy Institute, available at <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/integration-role-communities-institutions-and-state>; site accessed 02 April 2016.

²⁸ Business Dictionary, "Naturalized Citizen," available at <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/naturalization.html>; site accessed 02 April 2016.

²⁹ UNHCR, "Flowing Across Borders," available at <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html>; site accessed 07 February 2016.

³⁰ Steven Vertovec, "Transnationalism" (London: Routledge, 2009), 1.

Terminological Challenge

One of the challenges in writing this thesis is finding an appropriate title in referring my informants. As some of my informants have been living in Norway for many decades, I found it inappropriate to call them refugees, but as others were recently arrived, I found it unfitting to call them immigrants either. Therefore, I ended up using both words interchangeably and at several instances, I also used diaspora in referring the entire group.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research focuses on the role of Eritrean refugees in Norway for the homeland-development, largely in light of political and economic perspectives. I want to understand the state of Eritrean refugees' engagement and contribution for homeland-development and how such engagements impact their daily lives in the host country. I have attempted to uncover the main challenges and opportunities for Eritrean immigrants in the role of 'Development Agents'.

In this chapter, discussions of data collection methods such as the existing literature in the library, selection of respondents, setting selection, doing interviews and ethical guidelines for conducting the research are presented. I also discuss my role as a researcher, in relation with issues of objectivity.

Why Qualitative Research

Customarily, we have two major research methods in acquiring knowledge, i.e. qualitative and quantitative approaches. Both methods differ in the philosophy of understanding epistemology and data gathering mechanisms. Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkins state that, there were recurrent debates among scholars regarding relative advantage and uses of the two approaches.³¹ Qualitative and quantitative approaches are often referred as naturalism and positivism respectively. Today the term 'positivism' has become little more than a term of misuse among social scientists, as a result, its meaning has become buried.³² Most social scientists are increasingly using a qualitative method as the main system of data collection.

Among the major tenets of positivism is the argument that states, the methodological model for social research is physical science, conceived in terms of the logic of the experiment. Where quantitatively measured variables are manipulated in order to identify the relationship among them.³³ And this idea has taken to be as the defining feature of science. Hammersley states, positivism uses statistical laws as the goal for science and they also claim the foundation for science

³¹ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkins, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* third edition (London: Routledge, 2007), 5.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

is observation. They give priority to phenomena that are directly observable or that can be logically inferred from what is observable; any appeal to imperceptibility runs the risk of being dismissed as metaphysical assumption.

Qualitative research is chosen in this research over quantitative, for the former is more appropriate in surveying a real-world setting. Robert K. Yin, elaborates why one needs to choose qualitative approach:

You just might want to study a real-world setting, discover how people cope and thrive in that setting-and capture the contextual richness of people's everyday lives. Just consider the variety of topics that you might be able to study.³⁴

Hence, as the study is mainly descriptive in nature, qualitative method is found more appropriate. Through qualitative method, I could uncover an in-depth data in understanding social reality. It gives me as a researcher the ability to understand the 'why' and 'how' questions, which I can't normally answer via a quantitative method.

From this elaboration, qualitative research is more rich in its methodology and gives room for maneuvering in exploring the larger picture behind observable phenomena. Therefore, using qualitative technique is more convincing as the tool, in addressing my central research problems.

Methods of Data Collection, In-Depth Interview

Hammersley argues, when a researcher uses naturalism, it is favorable to use non-directive interviewing, in which the interviewee is allowed to talk at length in his or her own terms, as opposed to more directive questioning. The objective is to minimize, as much as possible, the influence of the researcher on what is said, and thus to enable open expression of the informant's perspective on the world.³⁵ This enabled me to learn new perspectives from my informants, while at the same time limiting my influence on the data outcome. Thus, I opted to use semi-structured interviews, and conducted an in-depth interview with eight carefully selected individuals. In this case, as a researcher my questions were loose, in a sense that I didn't ask each interviewee precisely the same questions.³⁶

However, I have carefully constructed the interview guide, to gain more knowledge on the opinions of my informants. First, I wrote down the larger research questions, then outlined the

³⁴ Robert Y. Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2011), 3.

³⁵ Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 101.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

broad areas of knowledge that are relevant to answering these questions. After that, I developed questions within each of these major areas, shaping them to fit a selected respondent. My main objective was to tap into their experiences and personal views.

I had also to adjust the language of the interview according to the respondents (age, gender, marital status). I worded my questions so that my respondents could be motivated to answer as honestly as possible. I often preferred asking 'how' questions rather than 'why' questions, to get stories of process, for example, "How did you come to Norway?"

I prepared the interview guide in the opening with a warm-up question, whereby the respondent could answer easily and at some length, however, without speaking too long. It doesn't have to be related directly to what I was trying to find out (although at times it might), but this initial rapport-establishing put me as an interviewer more at ease with my respondent and thus made the rest of the interview flow more smoothly. I was also thinking about the logical flow of the interview, even though, it was difficult at times. In addition, what types of follow-up questions should come next?

Difficult or potentially personal "sensitive" questions were asked toward the end of the interview, after rapport was established. The last question provided some closure for the interview, and left the respondent feeling empowered and listened.

Choosing informants

In qualitative research, the focus is getting an in-depth insight on a particular subject. Correspondingly, explanations generated from the study are expected to enable us to understand the social reality among the wider refugee population. In this case, the selection process becomes vital, by keeping in mind on how much valuable data could be generated. I was convinced in selecting my informants carefully, taking into consideration my selection criteria. Hammersley and Atkinson elaborate on the different criteria in selecting informants:

The sampling of persons may sometimes be undertaken in terms of fairly standard 'face-sheet' demographic criteria. That is depending on the particular context, one may sample persons by reference to categories of gender, 'race', ethnicity, age, occupation, educational qualifications, and so on.³⁷

³⁷ Ibid., 37.

In this regard, I weighted on the comparative advantage of carefully selecting my informants to that of random selection. I interviewed ten individuals, two of whom were Norwegians working with Eritrean refugees. Two of my Eritrean informants were women. Besides gender, I also took into consideration informants' educational background, age, marital status, duration of stay in Norway, as the main selection criteria. Selecting informants based on religious beliefs and ethnicity was difficult in using them as informant selection criteria. Regarding age, there is a gap of over forty years between the youngest and oldest informants, and this has enabled me to conduct comparative analysis between the first and contemporary generation of refugees' life experience.

Even though, most of my informants had good command of the English language and Norwegian, I preferred conducting all interviews in the informants' mother-language Tigrigna. Interviewing them in English might have been much easier, as it might have spared me from translating. However, I was convinced of the advantages of doing the interview in their mother language, as it enable them to express their ideas easily and deeply. In addition, it also helped me in understanding their views better, removing linguistic barriers, as we share a common language. But, I saw this as both an advantage and a challenge.

After conducting interviews, the transcription script was written in Tigrigna and translated into English in the processes of presenting findings and analysis.

Setting selection

My informants chose interview setting. I consciously gave them this choice in order to make sure the interview was done in a relaxed atmosphere. In this regard, Hammersley and Atkinson wrote on the advantages of allowing informants to choose the setting:

With many people interviewing them on their own territory, and allowing them to organize the context the way they wish, is the best strategy. It allows them to relax much more than they would in less familiar surroundings.³⁸

I found this method effective, as it enabled my informants to feel comfortable in telling their life stories. Most of my respondents chose their homes as a setting, and it gave them a sense of security, while sharing their personal stories. This rapport also exhibited the level of trust my informants bestowed me. When rapport is established to that extent, informants give detailed

³⁸ Ibid., 116.

information that otherwise might remain hidden. However, a couple of respondents chose the library and a cafeteria as a setting.

Validity and Reliability

Eventually, the goal of research is to understand the social reality. In this case, the validity of the data gathered is crucial. Invalid data could potentially compromise research findings. One of the reasons why researchers doubt on the validity of explanation, if the researcher has clearly made no effort to deal with opposing cases or to locate an example in a broader context. David Silverman, raises a good question, why qualitative researchers need to convince themselves first before attempting to convince others, on the reliability of the data collected:

Nonetheless, qualitative researchers, with their in-depth access to single cases, have to overcome a special temptation. How are they to convince themselves (and their audience) that their ‘findings’ are genuinely based on critical investigation of all their data and do not depend on a few well-chosen ‘examples’?³⁹

Without deep self-reflection and critical analysis on the lessons learned, and cross-examination of data gathered, it certainly is a challenge to come up with a valid data. It therefore becomes important to cross-check findings, and one way of overcoming this challenge is through conducting ‘Triangulation’ analysis method. Silverman defines Triangulations ‘as to the attempt to get a ‘true’ fix on a situation by combining different ways of looking at it (method triangulation) or different finding (data triangulation).’⁴⁰ In this case, I have been reading secondary information on newspapers and on the internet. In addition, I used my respondent’s validation, whenever I had doubts, I went back to my informants with my tentative results and refined my data in light of my subjects’ feedbacks.

Even though the term ‘reliability’ is a concept used for evaluating or testing quantitative research, the idea is most often used in all kinds of research. If we see the idea of testing as a way of data elicitation, then the most significant test of any quantitative study is its quality. ‘A good qualitative study can help us “understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing.”’⁴¹

³⁹ David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2010), 275.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁴¹ Nahid Golafshani, “Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research,” available at <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf>; site accessed 16 February, 2016.

I encountered one incident from one of my informants that raised reliability issue. Finding contradictory data, made me skeptical to treat his information seriously. Informants honesty could be subject to subjective evaluation by the researcher but obviously, when data contradict each other at some point, it becomes highly unlikely to use them.

The person interviewed was someone I closely knew before, and perhaps feeling uncomfortable during the interview with a tape-recorder on, opted to give me a slightly different narration. This is one classical example; a researcher could encounter in interviewing people you happen to know close. This also raises questions, had it not been my previous knowledge, I might not had suspected his sincerity. It is for this reason; critical examination of data becomes a necessity in generating reliable data. Robert K. Yin elaborates on the importance of proper data collection and examination:

A valid study is one that has properly collected and interpreted its data, so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world that was studied. Conversely, studies in any field are worthless if they arrive at false findings. Such an extreme outcome is unlikely to occur, but studies should nevertheless use design features that will strengthen the validity of their claims and findings.⁴²

In order to escape from this impasse, one has to take often time and raise questions in testing the reliability of the data collected. My informant, perhaps might have changed his mind ever since we met last. The most important thing is to question on the validity of the data gathered, before starting analyzing.

Secondary Data

I have extensively searched for relevant research materials on the web, and got a number of useful working papers relevant to the project. As far as my knowledge is concerned, there is no relevant research material written on the role of Eritrean refugees in Norway regarding homeland development. However, I found one interesting Ph.D. research publication by a Norwegian researcher Christine Smith-Simonsen entitled “Eritrea in our hearts?” that mainly address on the contribution of Norwegian individual actors and humanitarian organizations in the development assistance to Eritrea. Simonsen’s main focus was on the period of the armed struggle from 1961-1991 and in the immediate post-independence period, for this reason, I was not able to use much out it.

⁴² K. Kin, Qualitative Research from Start to Finish, 78.

A couple of writers extensively written on the role of Eritrean diaspora's transnationalism taking sampling Eritreans in the UK⁴³ and across Europe.⁴⁴ I gained good insight from both literature materials, as discussed in chapter four.

In addition, I extensively used relevant textbooks from the library at the School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger. Besides, other journals and publication on the internet, local and international newspapers were also used as a source of data.

Ethical Issues and my Role as The Researcher

From the outset, I was conscious of the possible ethical issues I might encounter in the course of the field work. I followed the ethical research guidelines specified by the School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger, which helped me a lot in remaining conscious in handling sensitive issues.

Before starting the research, I also had requested approval on my research methodology from the Norwegian Social Science Data Service Department(NSD). Among others, some of the major requirements of NSD are protecting informant's confidentiality and the means of data storage during investigation.

I prepared an interview consent that requires participants of the research to sign before doing the interviews. In the consent, I plainly provided the topic of research, the institution, confidentiality and the source of funds. Also, respondents were notified the interview was consent-based and they can withdraw from the research prior to the research completion. Information was also given on how data will be protected during the course of the study and eventually to get deleted after the end of the project.

In protecting my informants' confidentiality, in the discussion chapters, I am referring them with numbers from 1 to 7, when presenting data collected from interviews. However, two of my informants opted to use their real names. As they are already public figures, often writing articles on the Eritrean issue in local newspapers and websites, I was also convinced using their real names

⁴³ Paulos Tesfagiorgis, "Refugees and the Development of Africa: The case of Eritrean Refugees in Europe", available at http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf/eritrean_refugees.pdf site accessed 15 March 2016.

⁴⁴ Nicole Hirt, "The Eritrean Diaspora: Savior or Gravedigger of the Regime? Diaspora Responses to the Imposition of UN Sanctions"; available at https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/system/files/publications/wp236_hirt.pdf site visited 27 April 2016.

might not jeopardize their privacy. One Norwegian informant was also mentioned with a real name, on the condition of her consent.

During the fieldwork, I was at times feeling uneasy, if the gathered data would eventually be useful for my research. Would it help me answer my central research questions? At times, I felt lost, wondering if I had asked the right questions. I had to check back and forth my questionnaire guidelines. However, that sense of uneasiness slowly faded away, when I started to concentrate on the most important issues.

As is the case in any qualitative research, no matter how well research questions are prepared; I remained open for any data to review my research questions accordingly. After all, my mission was not to confirm my preconceived theory (deductive), but to understand the social reality from the base. In this case, I had to restructure my research questions, being cautious wrong questions could lead my research into wrong conclusions. In this regard, I found it much more useful to use inductive reasoning, expecting the outcome of the study in generating a new explanation of the social reality.

I remained open for all eventualities restraining my personal bias (at my best ability at least), in understanding the social reality scientifically. Moreover, I was fortunate to get informants, each of whom with rich individual life experiences. I am convinced their story epitomizes somehow their own peers regarding age, educational background and gender. Out of eight my Eritrean informants, none of them had close age proximity. Some of them were university students, workers, and others were retirees.

My informants came to Norway for different reasons, under different circumstances. Some of them as asylum seekers, others through family reunification. Understanding why they came to Norway helped me to answer; how they perceive the social reality in Norway. As I learnt from my preliminary study, there is a big opinion difference among them. This enabled me to employ comparative analysis based on their individual life experience on their perception of social reality.

What I initially perceived as an advantage was doing research with my journalism background. But, I learned later, writing as a journalist and as a researcher is remotely close. In this case, I ended up constantly reminding myself as a researcher, keeping the golden rules of academic work.

Studying your fellow countrymen was also not without a challenge. Especially without critical reflection, sharing the same language might be frivolously deemed as an advantage. Some of my informants were friends or friends of my friends. For this reason, I was constantly reflecting on this issue, asking myself, if I had made the right decision? Was I asking the right questions? Undeniably, having a good network and close relationship helped me build mutual trust with my informants but not sure at what cost. Could the same research questions, generate similar outcome by an outsider? Could my informants might have behaved more politically correct to a stranger than to one of their own? Obviously, there are advantages and disadvantages, when it comes to studying people with the same background.

In addition, consciously or unconsciously, one may not escape from the bias problem. But it helps, staying well prepared beforehand, reminding yourself on the task of gathering data, and putting aside personal opinions and beliefs.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MIGRATION DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

In this chapter, the major migration theories are discussed in the first part. In the second part, the main contentious issues in the debate between pessimists and optimists, on migration development discourse are presented. In the end, current thinking on the relations between migration, development and conflict is examined.

General Migration Theories

As the migration development research is intrinsically interdisciplinary, there is no widely accepted dominant theory. The study involves sociology, political science, law, demography, economics, geography, psychology and cultural studies. However, there are several theories that explain why international migration begins, such as, the neoclassical economics theory, historical-structural theory, the new economics of migration theory, segmented labor market theory, and the world system theory. Following will be the presentation of discussions on the first three major theories, which overly dominate the debate on migration development.

The Neo-Classical Equilibrium Perspective

The first major academic contribution to the study of migration is mainly based on the two articles written by the nineteenth-century geographer Ravenstein, where he framed his “Laws of Migration” from 1885.⁴⁵ He elaborated on the strong inseparable link between migration and development, emphasizing that, the major cause of migration is economic. He presumed that migration is closely connected with "push-pull" factors. Push factors such as high unemployment rates, low wages, lack of health care, and pull factors such as: high wages, low unemployment force people towards leaving their countries of residence. In this case, he underscores the main cause for migration is the pursuit of better economic opportunities abroad.

At the micro-level, neo-classical migration theory considers migrants as individual rational actors, who decide to travel abroad on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis.⁴⁶ Provided they have a free choice and full access to information, individuals are anticipated to go where they can be the

⁴⁵ Hein de Haas, “Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective”, International Migration Institute 9, (2008): 4. Available at <http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/pdfs/wp/wp-09-08.pdf>; site accessed 02 April 2016.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 5.

most productive, in this case, where they are able to earn the highest wages. This capacity obviously depends on the specific skills a person holds and on the specific structure of labor markets.

Russell King, criticizes Ravenstein ideas for placing more emphasize on internal than international migration.⁴⁷ Here are some of the main critical observations he made:

- Migrants move mainly over short distances; those going longer distances head for the great centers of industry and commerce.
- Most migration is from agricultural to industrial areas.
- Large towns grow more by migration than by natural increase.
- Migration increases along with the development of industry, commerce and transport.
- Each migration stream produces a counter stream.
- Females are more migratory than males, at least over shorter distances; males are only a majority in international migration.
- The major causes of migration are economic.

King's critical observation, help us to understand more on the limitations of understanding international migration based on Ravensteins elaboration. In this case, it is important to discuss other theories of migration in understanding international migration phenomena through a different angle.

Historical-Structural Theory and Asymmetric Growth

A fundamentally different explanation of migration was provided as of the 1960s by the historical-structural paradigm on development, which places its intellectual roots in Marxist political economy and in world systems theory.⁴⁸ Hein de Haas elaborates, contemporary historical-structural theory mainly developed in response to functionalist (neo-classical) and developmentalist-modernizationist methods towards development. Historical-structuralists assume that economic and political power is unevenly distributed among developed and underdeveloped countries, that people have unequal access to resources, and that capitalist expansion has the tendency to reinforce these inequalities.⁴⁹ This theory further stipulates, instead of modernizing

⁴⁷ Russel King, "Theories and Typologies of Migration: An Overview and a Primer," (Malmo: MIM, 2013), 12.

⁴⁸ Stephen Castles et al., *The Age of Migration* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: MacMillan Publishers Ltd, 2003), 25.

⁴⁹ De Haas, *Migration and development*, 7.

and steadily progressing towards economic development, underdeveloped countries are trapped by their disadvantaged position within the global geopolitical structure.

Another explanation of the structural theory is the concept developed by M. J. Piore as 'dual labor markets'. This term denotes to the two types of jobs that are prevalent in a capitalist economy. The first are the safe, permanent high-skilled and well-paid jobs. The second are the momentary, unpleasant, low status jobs, low-paid, also known as the 3-D jobs (dirty, dangerous and demanding).⁵⁰ These jobs provide limited opportunities for promotion to better jobs, and are often unguarded by workers' rights legislation and labor standards. In many cases local workers are not attracted in such badly paid jobs, therefore they are taken up by new migrants.⁵¹

New Economics of Migration Theory

This theory is considered as an extension of neo-classical migration perspectives, which emerged in the 1980s, and views migration as the result of a decision made by families or groups than by individuals.⁵² Migration decisions regarded to be based on an analysis of costs and benefits by a family or a community, which seeks to maximize its income by minimizing risks that may result such as from crop failures. This approach has been termed the 'new economics of migration'.⁵³

Similar to the neoclassical models, push-pull factors are employed to understand the family's or groups decision making. One such example would be, when a family decides to send one of its members to work in another country and depend on remittances to minimize the risks for the rest of the family.

Aleksandra Tomanek outlined the following central ideas based on this model, the text is paraphrased:⁵⁴

- Families, households and other culturally defined units of production and consumption are those who count in analysis for migration research (not individuals).

⁵⁰ King, Theories and Typologies of Migration, 16.

⁵¹ Striking Women, "History of Migration," available at <http://www.striking-women.org/page/references> site accessed 08 March 2016.

⁵² King, Theories and Typologies of Migration, 22.

⁵³ Striking Women, "History of Migration".

⁵⁴ Aleksandra Tomanek, "International Migration Theories," available at <http://understandingmigration.blogspot.no/> site accessed 02 April 2016.

- A wage disparity is not the necessary condition for making a decision to migrate to another country.
- When wage inequality fades, does not necessarily mean international migration stops. The conviction to migration will exist if other markets in the country of origin such as: capital market, insurance market, consumer credit market etc. are absent or deficient.
- Governments could change the size of migration flows through amending labor markets and, in case they do not exist or are imperfect.

Her elaboration helps us to understand why individual's economic factor may not be sufficient in explaining why people opt to migrate, by enabling us to see migration flow in the context of a family or a country.

However, this theory neglects the role of political instability and lack of freedom in forcing people to leave their countries in search of protection abroad. Like Ravensteins idea, the emphasis is placed on the economic factor, without discussing migration in the context of political instability. This might have been the biggest shortfall of this theory, in most cases, poverty is the result of poor governance and political instability.

Optimists Versus Pessimists

Over the last five decades, the effect of migration on development in migrant sending countries has been the subject of persistent and sometimes heated debate with opposing views of the “migration optimists” and “migration pessimists.”⁵⁵ The diverse views on migration and development reflect the deeper paradigmatic divisions in social theory (*i.e.*, functionalist versus structuralist paradigms) and development theory (*i.e.*, balanced growth versus asymmetric development paradigms). To a substantial extent, this also reflects ideological disparities between neoliberal and state-centrist views.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ De Haas, “Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective,” available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4744987/>; site accessed 08 March 2016.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

The migration optimists are largely motivated by neo-classical migration economy and developmentalist modernization theories, which are all associated to the functionalist paradigm in social theory.⁵⁷ In spite of the differences between neo-classical and developmentalist views, they both believe that migration generally has a positive impact on the development process in sending countries. However, in an effective neo-classical world, the developmental role of migration is fully realized through price equalization. Common developmentalists expect migration to generate counter flows of capital to sending country via remittances, investment and knowledge. They believe this to subsequently stimulate development and modernization. In particular return migrants are seen as active agents of economic growth. Most migration pessimists appeal to structuralist social theory⁵⁸, which encompasses neo-Marxist dependency world systems. In general, structuralist tend to address the issue of migration development as a negative phenomenon contributing to the further underdevelopment of sending countries.

De Haas summarizes the contentious views on migration development between pessimists and optimists.

Table 1. Opposing views on Migration-development between optimists and pessimists.⁵⁹

Optimists	versus	Pessimists
Functionalist		Structuralist
Neo-Classical		Neo-Marxist
Modernization		Disintegration
Net North-South transfer		Net South-North transfer
Brain gain		Brain Drain
More Equality		More Inequality
Remittance Investment		Consumption
Development		Dependency
Less Migration		More Migration

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Structuralism as a school of thought emphasizes the view that society is prior to individuals. It employs the nature of social interaction as patterned behavior and uses it as a tool in all sociological analysis. Available at <http://www.sociologyguide.com/social-structure/structuralism.php>; site visited 08 March 2016.

⁵⁹ De Haas, Migration and Development, 24.

The table illustrates the strong opposing views, which are yet to be settled in the migration development discourse. My position is pessimistic in the debate, even though lately scholars are arguing on the benefit of remittance for sending countries. Remittance alone cannot outweigh the consequences and guarantee sustainable long-term development. Most often, the rich or educated class tend to immigrate and their absence creates shortage of capable manpower, which is critical in building sustainable development. Capital flow in itself can hardly achieve durable economic growth, it only creates more unequal society, leading to more migration. And more migration deters development as more and more people tend to look outward for economic opportunity, than working to develop their country. Thus, receiving countries benefit from cheap labor, while sending countries suffer from shortage of manpower and stagnant economy, remaining constant source of cheap labor to the rich northern countries.

The New 'Migration-and-Development' Optimism

The academic and policy debates on migration and development have a habit of swinging back and forth like a pendulum from optimism in 1970s to pessimism in the 1990s, and back again to more optimistic views in recent years.⁶⁰ Perhaps a few years down the line the current optimism, could shift towards pessimism. There is no absolute truth on the subject of migration development; it is in the eye of the beholder. What could be positive for developed countries may not be the case for sending countries.

However, Oded Stark and David E. Bloom elaborate on the new migration development optimism by arguing migration could benefit everyone provided governments pursue the right policies.⁶¹ They emphasise on the enjoyment of freedom and higher living standard by migrants but noted the risk of vulnerability. Individual migrants certainly benefit from enjoyment of equal right, perhaps become naturalized citizen at one stage. On the other hand, migrants could also remain vulnerable in terms of finding lucrative and secure jobs. This is noticed especially in times of economic crisis.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Oded Stark and David E. Bloom. The New Economics of Labour Migration, *The American Economic Review* 75(2): 173-78; available at http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/SummerSchool2013/readings/Kaczmarczyk_Reading%206.pdf; site visited 10 March 2016.

Stark and Bloom also stated that, destination countries benefit from cheap low-skill labour and new ideas, however also risk ethnic tension. The risk could be both in short and long-term. As society becomes more heterogeneous the risk of ethnic tension is there, especially when integration fails, and systematic marginalization exist. In the short-term receiving countries could benefit from cheap labour.

Sending countries win through remittances and knowledge transfers, however, risk brain-drain. At a policy level the risks of migration are best minimized and rewards maximized by encouraging ‘circular migration’ and ‘engaging diasporas’.⁶² These are the two most important policy recommendation in the migration development discourse and their discussion follow.

Circular Migration

Circular migration is gradually recognized as one of the few means for resources to flow from core areas (cities and high-income countries) to peripheral areas (rural areas and low-income countries).⁶³ The temporary migrants are the main agents of circular migration, assumed likely to engage in sending remittance to their families more often than the permanent ones. It is argued as long as there is an idea of going back home, solid financial base becomes a prerequisite.

But what does circular migration entails? Mercedes Fernández and M^a Carolina Parra attempt to elaborate the meaning of circular migration as the movement of back and forth between countries:⁶⁴ “the to and from movement between two places, [this movement] includes more than one return [to the place of origin]”. Its design suggests that migrants can travel or live abroad in several countries of destination before returning once more to their country of origin.

They denote circular migration is not restricted to bilateral movement between countries of origin and a single destination country. Over the last years, debates and studies at academic and

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Graemo Hugo, “What we know About Circular Migration and Enhanced Mobility”; Migration Policy Institute. No. 7, Sep. 2013 <file:///C:/Users/teddi/Downloads/Circular-Migration.pdf> site visited 09 March 2016.

⁶⁴ Mercedes Fernández and M^a Carolina Parra, “Integration of Highly Skilled Third Country Nationals in Europe: A New Proposal for Circular Talent Management.” (Comillas Pontifical University: University Institute of Studies on Migration): 27; available at http://explotacion.mtin.gob.es/oberaxe/documentacion_descargaFichero?bibliotecaDatoId=4080; site accessed 01 March 2016.

institutional level have increased around the definition of circular migration, and on the forms it should take.

International organizations and development agencies have also renewed calls for arrangements of temporary migration. In this regard, supporting the idea of circular migration, Nina Glick Schiller and Thomas Faist argue, ‘highly skilled’ are transferring their skills from North to South and from West to East (Brain gain) rather than furthering the diminution of ‘talent’ in the South (brain drain).⁶⁵ Theoretically, this may appear a sound argument, with all its pragmatic adversities. However, circular migration appeals only for an exclusive geographic migration phenomenon, in this case South-North. What about the south-south labor migration, especially migration from the poor south and east to the rich gulf countries? One may argue migrants in the gulf countries are often hired on temporary basis anyways. But the truth is they end up working often until retirement on temporary basis. In addition, they are often mistreated, at times physically abused and wages denied.⁶⁶ Therefore, placing the focus only in the North-South migration phenomena, is quit unfortunate.

The migration development debate mainly focuses on the implication of South-North migration phenomena; often in the interest of receiving countries. Most migration researchers happen to be northerners; it becomes least surprising when southern countries become subjects of study with little interest on the long-term implication of migration for their development. The fact that, we have no conclusive theory in this discourse, is perhaps testament to the lack of interest by wealthy western academic institutions.

Hence, I disagree in the over emphasis placed on circular migration as a win-win approach in the migration-development debate. I should admit receiving countries could enjoy some benefits, but that benefit should not be at a huge cost to an individual’s immigrants’ life. Migrants should not be subjected to forced mobility. Their dream of establishing a settled life should not be disrupted by policy makers’ decision making.

⁶⁵ Faist and Schiller, *Migration, Development and Transnationalization*, 7.

⁶⁶ Anisur Rahman, “Migration and Human Rights in the Gulf;” available at <http://www.mei.edu/content/migration-and-human-rights-gulf>; site accessed 03 March 2016.

Most of all, playing a meaningful role in the enhancement of home countries local economy, requires strong financial resource, which is hardly possible to accumulate without staying for a lengthy period of time in exile. Especially the relocation for married couples may even occur to be more challenging. Children having grownup abroad and started schooling there, relocation could be a bad experience.

In addition, the recipient countries benefit from their talent, while offloading them to their home countries around retirement age, avoiding payment of pension benefits later. Therefore, I would argue that, this approach mainly serves the interest of the Northern countries, almost at a zero cost to their economy.

Engaging Diaspora

A more successful method seems to be the creation of an attractive social, economic and political environment in the homeland that restore trust among migrants in the state, and that would motivate them to remain engaged in their origin countries, to return and circulate, and to make social and economic investments.⁶⁷ These days, sending countries are gradually abandoning the ‘brain drain’ assertiveness by trying to keep the skilled at home, and while embarking upon policies celebrating emigrants as valiant citizens, as they seek to encourage them to direct financial resources homeward, in the form of remittances, taxes and investment.⁶⁸

Emigrants themselves have increasingly assumed political roles in their origin countries, and some states are recognizing their double belonging gradually introduced dual citizenship rights. However, Norway remains reluctant in allowing its immigrant population to have dual citizenship, without which I argue, their engagement with the homeland is most likely to be curtailed. Diaspora engagement is the most viable approach for home countries to utilize their contribution in their development endeavors.

⁶⁷ Thomas Lacroix, “Migration and Development Research scoping study” (Governance and Social Development Resource Center: 2008): 9; available at <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00820370/document>; site accessed 05 March 2016.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Conflicts, Refugees, and Migration

Ninna Nyberg Sørensen argues, development, politics, migration and refugeeeness are integrally linked.⁶⁹ Economic disparities between developing and developed countries have long been seen as key determinants of migration. Within migration studies, security related inequalities between developing and developed countries contributing for migration have been studied less scientifically.

For a period longer than migration as such, states have regarded refugee mobility as a political and security issue that needs international agreements.⁷⁰ According to Leoscher and Milner, international political concern for the destiny of refugees first appeared after World War I, when huge refugee flows due to the breakup of the Habsburg, Hohenzollern, Ottoman, and Romanov empires in Europe, Turkey, the Middle East. Russia and from the Russian Civil War, the Polish Soviet War, and the Russian famine of 1921 exacerbated inter-state tensions. This also endangered the security of European countries. Consequently, within the League of Nations, an international framework of institutions and agreements was created in 1921.⁷¹

In the course of the Cold War, the political and security viewpoint on refugees was universal: they were understood as part of the struggle between the East and the West. In regions of intense superpower struggle and competition, refugees were armed, and their military cause were supported not only materially but also ideologically.⁷² Therefore, throughout the Cold War, refugees and safety problems they raised were considered to be part of a wider set of geo-political consideration.

Many Eritreans came to the United States and Europe during the cold war period, as a result of the civil war between the two rebel factions, Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). Simultaneously, civilians were also escaping from the ravaging civil-war with the Ethiopian government. An Eritrean scholar Petros Tesfagiorgios argues, citing

⁶⁹ Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, "The Development Dimension of Migrant Transfers", Danish Institute for International Studies working paper No. 16 (Copenhagen, 2004), 20. Available at <https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/6671/uploads>; site visited 20 March 2016.

⁷⁰ Faist and Schiller, *Migration, Development and Transnationalization*, 109.

⁷¹ Gil Loescher and Games Milner, *Protracted Refugee Situation: Domestic and International Security Implications* (London: Routledge, 2005), 23.

⁷² Faist and Schiller, *Migration, Development and Transnationalization*, 109.

the case of Eritrean Refugees in the UK, by stating in the early 70s and 80s refugees were far better treated and accommodated than today:

Refugees were treated sympathetically and political parties were active in raising awareness and understanding among their constituencies of the issues refugees faced. Institutions which supported refugees were close to the refugee communities. They worked in partnership to capacity build, train and empower refugee communities. There was affirmative action in education, housing and other social services.⁷³

Nicholas Van Hear and Ninna Nyberg-Sorensen also denotes nowadays, there is a general unanimity that, since the end of the Cold War, conflicts have taken new forms, in which civilians are seen as important constituents of warfare rather than simply subsidiary to it.⁷⁴ Faist and Schiller also agree on the change of perception on migration in the post-Cold War era, when the security implications of forced migration gained more salience.⁷⁵

These days, there is a growing common acknowledgement among European states and North America, that refugee movements not only are a consequence of insecurity but could also be a cause of instability for host countries, countries of origin, and regions in conflict and could even pose a danger to wider international peace and security. On 13 November 2015 a terrorist attack in Paris caused the death of more than 130 people. A Syrian passport was found near the body of one suspect for the terror attack. The man was alleged to have entered the country posing as a refugee amidst the hundreds of thousands of refugees entering Greece from Turkey.⁷⁶ Incidents of terrorist attack are creating a backlash among European Union member states, often fail in harnessing a common strategy to deal with the migrant crisis. Hence, there is a growing debate among policy makers and analysts on the role of states in respecting international humanitarian obligations in protecting refugees, while keeping their security intact from any infringement by terrorists who could pose as refugees.⁷⁷

⁷³ Tesfagiorgios, "Refugees and the Development of Africa.

⁷⁴ Nicholas Van Hear and Ninna Nyberg-Sorensen, *The Migration Development Nexus*; 11, available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_dev_nexus.pdf; site visited 18 February 2016.

⁷⁵ Faist and Schiller, *Migration, Development and Transnationalization*, 110.

⁷⁶ Ian Traynor, "Paris Attacks, European Leaders Link Terror to Migration", *The Guardian*; available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/14/paris-attacks-european-leaders-link-terror-threats-to-immigration> site accessed 18 February 2016.

⁷⁷ Al Jazeera and agencies, "UN says EU-Turkey refugee deal would violate law", available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/eu-turkey-refugee-deal-contravene-law-unhcr-160308160629966.html> site accessed 09 March 2016.

Poverty and Migration

Before discussing the link between poverty and migration, it is important to define poverty. In 1995, more than 117 countries met in Copenhagen, for the world summit on poverty, and adopted a declaration, a program of action to alleviate and eradicate poverty. During this summit, they classified poverty into two categories as ‘absolute poverty’ a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs such as food, safe drinking water etc. But ‘overall poverty’ is defined as lack of income and productive resources to insure sustainable livelihoods.⁷⁸ However, poverty is largely defined by the United Nations as multi-dimensional, as it includes lack of political participation:

Fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one’s food or a job to earn one’s living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation.⁷⁹

From the above perspective, poverty is not only lack of basic human needs and income, but it could also be a denial of choices and opportunities, by implication lack of political participation and freedom. Rightly so, when people are denied freedom, their enthusiasm for a better future evaporates, forcing them to move elsewhere in search a better life or resort into taking up arms to remove incumbent governments.

However, how exactly is poverty related to migration? Hugh Waddington and Rachel Sabathes-Wheeler argues; poverty and vulnerability are likely to have two inconsistent effects on migration, by providing motivations to migrate, either as a strategy for income diversification or out of destitution; but also by reducing the ability to migrate because the transfer costs involved in terms of physical, financial and social capital are too high.⁸⁰ The inconsistency is well observed; the level of poverty determines either as a push factor for people to immigrate in the hope of a

⁷⁸ David Gordon, “Indicators of Poverty and Hunger: Expert group meeting on youth development indicators United Nations Headquarters, New York;” available at http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/ydiDavidGordon_poverty.pdf; site accessed 18 February 2016.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Hugh Waddington and Rachel Sabathes-Wheeler, “How Does Poverty Affect Migration Choice? A Review of Literature.” (Brighton: Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalization and Poverty, 2003):12; http://www.migrationdrc.org/publications/working_papers/WP-T3.pdf site accessed 18 February 2016.

better life or people might be forced to stay at home simply because they couldn't afford the expenses. This is particularly true when the migration is from south to North, but may not be the case in the south-south migration phenomena, where the cost is relatively low.

The likelihood of earning poor income is also a deterrence, unless migration is precipitated by conflict. This is particularly true in the case of Eritrean refugees, after escaping to neighboring countries, spend thousands of dollars often to smugglers in reaching destination countries, mostly Europe. The expected reward is perceived worth the risk involved and it could mean death while crossing the Sahara Desert or the Mediterranean Sea. This is of course, excluding the real treat of hijack by Islamic extremist groups in Libya, who often decapitate their captives.⁸¹

However, people in developing countries need capitals as well as networks to engage in international migration. Van Hear and Sørensen argues, there is no direct link between economic development, population growth, poverty, social and political change on one hand, and international migration on the other.⁸² Consequently, poverty reduction is not in itself a migration-reducing strategy.

Migrants as 'Development Agents'

Faist and schiller argue, today migration has mutated from being a problem for economic development to being a solution.⁸³ This means the assertion that development failure produces international migration has given way to 'new mantra' that is, migrants may help to advance economic development in their countries of origin. Hence, the classical focus in migration studies on the causes and side effects of population movement has changed to a focus on the type of migrants and migration that will enhance development.

Migrant Remittance

Recent available census data from the World Bank disclose that, the number of international migrants is estimated at 247 million in 2013, significantly larger than the previous estimate of 232 million, and is likely to surpass 250 million in 2015.⁸⁴ Remittances sent by migrants to developing

⁸¹ Youtube, "Video: Islamic State Executes Ethiopian Christians in Libya"; available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m88nsKqBPwY>; site visited 02 May 2016.

⁸² Van Hear and Sørensen, "The Migration Development Nexus," 5.

⁸³ Faist and Schiller, *Migration, Development and Transnationalization*, 7.

⁸⁴ The World Bank, "Migration and Remittances: Recent Developments and Outlook, Special Topic: Financing for Development"; (The World Bank Migration and Development Brief No. 24, 2015); available at

countries is projected to have reached \$436 billion in 2014, a 4.4 percent increase over the 2013 level. With the exception of Europe and Central Asia, where remittance flows restrained due to the deterioration of the Russian economy and the devaluation of the ruble all developing regions recorded positive growth.

Kim Knott and Sean McLoughlin argue, brain drain is increasingly justified by alluding to the development impact of remittance, which flow to the global south.⁸⁵ Obviously, from the 2015 World Bank report one can understand remittances remain a key source of funds for developing countries, far exceeding official development aid and even foreign direct investment, excluding China. In addition, the World Bank report also stress that, the Global Economic Prospects for 2015 indicated that remittances were also less volatile than official aid flows.

The African Development Fund also acknowledges the fact that remittance is getting larger than the official development aid given to poor African countries.⁸⁶ But, could remittance deliver sustainable development as much as it is hoped by policy makers? As far as my knowledge is concerned there is no verifiable evidence to support this assertion. Nevertheless, one cannot deny the visible impact of remittance for individual households.

As I have discussed earlier remittance alone can't guarantee sustainable development. Development can only be materialized when remittance is utilized efficiently with a grassroots based policy approach, that demands an enlightened manpower and visionary leadership, resilient to external intimidation by neo-liberal forces. Without governments in poor countries playing an active role in mobilizing resources, investing in education and public infrastructures, the dream of sustainable development could be hard if not impossible to materialize.

Another prevalent assumption in the migration and development literature is that, migrants and their families do not often invest their money efficiently but rather spend their money on

<https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1288990760745/MigrationandDevelopmentBrief24.pdf>; site accessed 19 February 2016.

⁸⁵ Kim Knott and Sean Mc Loughlin, *Diaspora: Concepts, Intersections, Identities* (London: Zed Books, 2010), 103.

⁸⁶ Fragile States Unit, "The Role of the Diaspora in Nation Building: Lessons for Fragile and Post-Conflict Countries in Africa"; available at <http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/2011%20The%20role%20of%20the%20Diaspora%20in%20Nation%20building%20-%20lessons%20for%20fragile%20and%20post-%20conflict%20countries%20in%20Africa.pdf>; site accessed 19 February 2016.

consumption, such as imported consumer goods, and on nonproductive enterprises such as housing.⁸⁷ This is a sound assertion, the disposition of money alone can't bring development, not only results in misappropriation of money but also creates more inequality. In his vital review, M. Lipton underscores that recipients use remittances first to pay off debts incurred in paying migration cost or for education of their children. More than 90 percent of remittances are spent on everyday consumption.⁸⁸ I also agree with his statement, most consumption activities only serve to strengthen status, such as high payments for dowry prices, feasts, funerals and the construction of pretentious, luxurious houses. Moreover, remittances may also be directly used to finance the migration of other family members. This is often the case in the Eritrean diaspora in the west, as success sometimes is measured by the number of close family members one manages to finance for their resettlement to the West.

Main Gaps in Migration and Development Studies

Schiller and Faist argue, the topic of migration and development is becoming an important field of study, yet there are many unanswered questions.⁸⁹ They underscore that the notion and paradigms underlying the study of migration and development is asymmetrical and the idea of mutual transfer of resources that accompany migration are deeply flawed and continue to reflect the interests of the global north, the most powerful states, and the globe-spanning institutions that serve their interests.

Thomas Faist a renowned scholar on issues of transnationalism, raises some critical observations on the ways in which development studies have approached migration. He discloses that migration and development discourses generally take the global south as the object of development, obscuring the transnational flows of labor and capital to the north, which serve to develop that region.⁹⁰ Largely migration is studied by western scholars and its outcome often serve western interest.

⁸⁷ Hein de Haas, "Migration and development, 9.

⁸⁸ Michael Lipton, Migration from the Rural Areas of Poor Countries: The impact on rural productivity and income distribution, apud World Development, 1980, 8.

⁸⁹ Faist and Schiller, Migration, Development and Transnationalization, 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 13.

CHAPTER FOUR

RELEVANT LITRATURE ON ERITREAN DIASPORA AND HOMELAND DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

This chapter discusses literature written in the context of Eritrean immigrants in other European countries. The role of Eritrean diaspora in relation to the homeland and the challenges of long-distance nationalism is addressed. Eritrean diaspora character as promoters of peace or conflict, is discussed in light of existing intercommunal divisions.

Theoretical Framework on Diaspora and Homeland Relations

Over the last two decades the concept of “diaspora” has become a flamboyant subject for researchers and policy makers. Bahar Baser and Ashok Swain state, numerous researchers tried to define the “diaspora” concept, and a number of them have concentrated on its impacts in the host-land or homelands’ socio-economic life and politics.⁹¹ However, these days, the interest in investigating the diaspora has shifted towards understanding, “diaspora’s role in conflict and conflict resolution”. This topic has become particularly important after the end of the Cold War and, more recently, after 9/11.

In research of armed conflict, scholars debate on the influence of diaspora on civil wars in their home countries. Many scholars state that diasporas are especially prone to political extremism and use violence to resolve political disputes. Jonathan Hall and Ashok Swain argue, remaining in the homeland and experiencing the dreadfulness of war sobers earlier idealistic goals of gaining territorial sovereignty or state power and tempers rather than aggravates tensions between groups.⁹² Those who left their country during civil wars, however, avoid the deterrent costs of war. Once in exile diasporas are empowered by economic gains and by the freedom to pursue extremist agendas. Other scholars however, counter argue that diasporas are working to promote peace and in conflict resolution in their home countries.

Thus far, it seems like two opposing views dominate the study of diaspora behavior, that means, classifying the diaspora as good or bad, peace or conflict promoter, spoiler or peace maker.

⁹¹ Bahar Baser and Ashok Swain, “Diaspora Design Versus Homeland Realities: Case Study of Armenian Diaspora” available at http://www.cria-online.org/6_5.html; site visited 22 February 2016.

⁹² Ashok Swain et al., *Globalizations and Challenges to building peace* (London: Anthem Press), 107.

Actually, it is not so simple to tag any diaspora group with one of the labels. It very problematic to assume that one diaspora group has one common point of view as diasporas are not homogeneous groups, and they have their own divisions.⁹³ However, this has not deterred some from perceiving diasporas as reckless and unfathomable long-distance nationalist groups, with more negligible ideas than homeland policy makers, and that they are obstinate when it comes to making concessions on sensitive issues.

Baser and Swain in another paper titled ‘diaspora as peace makers’ argue that diasporas may act as bridges between their host-land and homeland, making it easier to bring a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the homeland. As the diaspora have the leverage to lobby to both sides and they also have the capacity to be highly effective on post-conflict reconstruction.⁹⁴ It should be stated that in studying diaspora behavior, it is extremely hard to come up with a universally applicable framework. However, majority of the studies on diaspora politics put weight on its conflict promoting character.

Background History to the Conflict in Eritrea

Similar to most of African States, Eritrea’s existence as a nation was precipitated European colonialism. The Italians colonized Eritrea from 1889-1941. After the defeat of Italians in World War II, the British Military Administration(BMA), controlled Eritrea for 10 years. In 1950 the United Nations approved a resolution (390AV), federating Eritrea with Ethiopia against the stated wish of the people.⁹⁵ Ten years later Ethiopian Emperor Hailesellasié powerfully annexed Eritrea to Ethiopia. The war for independence from Ethiopia started in 1961, and after 30 years, the war ended with the demise of the Mengstu Regime in Ethiopia, eventually, Eritrea formally declaring its independence via referendum in May 24, 1993.

Nicole Hirt, a notable researcher on Eritrea states that, in 1994, the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF), a guerrilla organization which mainly led the fight against Ethiopia, renamed itself to People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), without making any significant change in its Maoist ideological organizational structure.⁹⁶ She further notes the ruling party (PFDJ) set out guidelines for Eritrea’s future, taking a cautious path to democratization, however,

⁹³ Baser and Swain, “Diaspora Design Versus Homeland Realities”.

⁹⁴ Baser and Swain, “Diasporas as Peacemakers: Third Party Mediation in Homeland Conflicts”, *International Journal on World Peace*, (Vol. 25, No. 3 (September 2008), pp. 7-28), 7.

⁹⁵ Tesfagiorgis, “Refugees and the Development of Africa, 7.

⁹⁶ Hirt, “The Eritrean Diaspora: Savior or Gravedigger of the Regime? 6.

its vision never came to realize. She further states, EPLF/PFDJ ideology is mainly molded by the President Isaias Afewerki's own worldview and has a strong Maoist principle by emphasizing on self-reliance. Tekeste Negash, a prominent exiled Eritrean scholar counter-argues, EPLF had never believed on democratic values from the outset, the very nature of the guerrilla organization could not allow for a functioning democratic institutions to flourish. Negash predicted on the challenging road ahead for the nation:

For many years to come, the government in Eritrea would remain under the firm control of the EPLF(PFDJ), a military organization which owed its success to the barrel of the gun rather than to the ballot box. The transition from a liberation army in power to a political party is painful and in the best of circumstances it might take up to a generation to accomplish such a process.⁹⁷

Negash's statement sound prophetic, 25 years after independence, the political elite in Eritrea seem to have no desire of democratization. On the contrary, the president turns out to be increasingly authoritarian. Today Eritrea is the only country in Africa without an independent media and a constitutional government, nicknamed by many writers as the 'North Korea of Africa'.

Throughout the armed struggle, the EPLF did not receive assistance from either Eastern or Western Block. The Eastern Block sided with then Marxist Ethiopian government and the Western Block was deterred by the ideological orientation of the EPLF from giving them assistance. This state of isolation led to two structural characteristics of the current Eritrean regime, one that insists on 'Self-reliance' with deep suspicion to the international community and on mobilizing diaspora Eritreans as a funding source.⁹⁸

The Eritrean Diaspora

In order to understand the socio-political scenario in the Eritrean diaspora, it is necessary to understand the different generation of refugees. There is a wide gap in the understanding of the social reality in Eritrea between these generations. Tesfagiorgis, classified Eritrean diaspora groups into three phases, based on the period of escalation of the civil war and the post-independence political development that consequently prompted for the massive flight of people into exile.⁹⁹ I found his classification methodology interesting, but his elaboration was too patriotic. Stated below is discussions of his outline.

⁹⁷ Tekeste Negash, *Eritrea and Ethiopia: The Federal Experience* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 173.

⁹⁸ Hirt, "The Eritrean Diaspora: Savior or Gravedigger of the Regime? 6.

⁹⁹ Tesfagiorgis, "Refugees and the Development of Africa" 9.

First Phase:

Around 1967, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF)¹⁰⁰ strengthened its activities in the Eastern and Western lowlands of Eritrea. Emperor Haile Selassie responded with a “scorch the earth” policy, as a result of the bombardment many villages destroyed and many people killed. This has resulted in the displacement of 30,000 people - mostly nomads and peasants, escaped to the Sudan.

Second Phase:

As the repression mounted, and the Guerrilla war intensified. By 1977 the two fronts, EPLF and ELF controlled almost all of Eritrea, with the exception of the capital Asmara and few other towns. Paulos argues the involvement of the Soviet Union changed the game on the ground. He notes, the Soviet Union decided to intervene in the conflict supporting the Marxist government in Ethiopia (Derg),¹⁰¹ the situation on the ground changed dramatically. In 1977-78 empowered by the purchase of modern armaments from the Soviet Union, the Ethiopian government launched a large-scale offensive and regained most of the territories it lost. The attack was accompanied by random air and artillery shelling of more than 100 villages. Consequently, this heightened conflict triggered the outflow of thousands of people from the cities and rural areas to the Sudan, and from there many spread to the rest of the world.

Third phase

After Eritrea’s independence, in Ethiopia a new government led by the Tigrean Peoples Liberations Front (TPLF) took power. The two countries ceased their hostility and built a close relationship using the same currency. The resolution of the conflict via referendum and the reconciliations that followed was acclaimed by many observers. Paulos further rightly argues on the high expectation from President Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia. He states, they were considered as progressive young leaders, hoped to deliver their people from wars, poverty, ignorance, bring peace, progress and prosperity. The International community was convinced that an African renaissance was on the making. Gaim Kibreab also elaborates the state of the relationship between the two countries was developing towards integration:

As recently as July 1996, the president of the Provisional GoE was quoted as saying that both governments were developing their relations where boundaries would be

¹⁰⁰ ELF, a guerilla organization which started the war of independence against Ethiopia in the early 60s, however demised from Eritrea after the long the ensuing civil war with the EPLF in 1981, giving the later a full control of the liberated areas.

¹⁰¹ A group of low-ranking military personnel that deposed Emperor Haileselesie in 1974.

meaningless. The Eritrean Ambassador to Ethiopia was even more explicit. In a recent interview he stated that, “forming an independent state was never the ultimate goal of our long struggle.”¹⁰²

However, all these dreams were dashed when war erupted between the two countries over border town of Badme in May 1998. Escalated into an all-out conventional war claiming the lives of more than one hundred thousand from both sides.¹⁰³ Although the two leaders signed an agreement to stop the war in December 2000, the two countries remain in a state ‘phony war’ as the no war no peace standoff continues. The Ethiopian Government refused to abide by the decision of the Border Commission.¹⁰⁴

The situation was further exasperated when in September 2001, the government imprisoned high ranking government officials, after calling for reform. This was followed by the crackdown on independent media, the then flourishing independent newspapers were closed, their editors imprisoned. Fourteen years after, none of them appeared in any court of law, condemned to languish in prison indefinitely.

The Eritrean government used the no war no peace stalemate, in justifying the long overdue demobilization of the national service conscripts. Consequently, the conscripts who were supposed to serve for a year and half, held hostage a never-ending military service, debilitating their productive age. Increasingly disillusioned, thousands of them started leaving the country in droves.

As the political developments continued to go from bad to worse, many young people feeling hopeless continue to escape largely to the Sudan and Ethiopia, often at a huge risk to their life. A commission of inquiry appointed by the United Nations warned that the dire situation in Eritrea can no longer be ignored and called on the UN Human Rights Council to uphold close inspection on violations committed in Eritrea that may constitute crimes against humanity.¹⁰⁵ Mike Smith, Chairperson of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea, stated “the number fleeing from such a small country – estimated at 5,000 people each month – is forcing the outside

¹⁰² Negash, Eritrea and Ethiopia: The Federal Experience, 176.

¹⁰³ Hirt, “The Eritrean Diaspora: Savior or Gravedigger of the Regime? 7.

¹⁰⁴ Tesfagiorgis, “Refugees and the Development of Africa”, 9.

¹⁰⁵ Harriet Alexander, “UN accuses Eritrea of crimes against humanity”; available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/eritrea/11658822/UN-accuses-Eritrea-of-crimes-against-humanity.html>; site accessed 22 April 2016.

world to take notice,” Mr. Smith also stated further, the hopeless situation in Eritrea is exacerbating alarming exodus of refugees:

“Eritrea’s dire human rights situation can no longer be ignored. Imagine the impact of this uncertainty on young Eritreans who lose all control over their own futures. Is it any wonder that Eritreans – most of them young people – are the second largest nationality after Syrians to resort to seaborne smugglers to cross the Mediterranean to Europe?”¹⁰⁶

According to the UN refugee agency, the number of Eritreans fleeing their country reached more than 400,000, almost doubling over the past six years. Based on this evidence, the Commission report, which was issued on June, 2015, stated “found that systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been and are being committed in Eritrea under the authority of the Government. Some of these violations may constitute crimes against humanity.”¹⁰⁷

Transnational Eritrean Diaspora

The term ‘diaspora’ is often used to designate any immigrant group. These days it is usually contended that the term “diaspora” is losing its meaning as it became a broad concept that it can no longer be used to categorize specific communities. In the past, Jewish, Greek or Armenian groups were only referred as diasporas.¹⁰⁸ In the current diaspora literature, one may find several definitions of diaspora putting emphasis on some features and eliminating or adding new ones to the definition. It creates confusion about the whole process of categorizing, which immigrant group is a diaspora and what are the criteria to distinguish them from other transnational networks and immigrant groups. Yossi Shain, defines diaspora as a group of people sharing common sense of national belongings:

A people with common national origin who reside outside a claimed or an independent home territory. They regard themselves or regarded by others as members or potential members of their country of origin (claimed or already existing) a status held regardless of their geographical location and citizen status outside their home country.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ UN News Center, “Thousands of civilians fleeing ‘rule of fear’ in Eritrea, say UN experts, warning of gross rights abuses”, available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51239#.VsyaVDbSnIW>; site accessed 23 February 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Eleni Sideri, “The Diaspora of the Term Diaspora: A Working-Paper of a Definition”, available at <http://transtexts.revues.org/247>; site visited 24 February 2016.

¹⁰⁹ Yossi Shain, “Ethnic Diasporas and US Foreign Policy”; *Political Science Quarterly*, (Vol. 109, No 5, Winter 1994-1995, pp. 811-841), 813.

From Shain perspective, one could also designate Eritrean immigrants in Norway as diaspora. However, the Eritrean diaspora is highly divided and polarized mainly on homeland political issues. Therefore, I would be discussing the role of Eritrean diaspora in Europe in the long-distance nationalism by reviewing some relevant literature.

Long-Distance Nationalism and Divided Community

Zlatko Skrbis, writes how long-distance nationalism could be a challenge to the host nation, when immigrants groups act non-responsibly in transnational activities:

As a global phenomenon, long-distance nationalism has two important repercussions that make it worthy of study. In terms of domestic politics, this issue boils down to nation-states now having to reckon with the non-responsible political participation of often unrealistic co-nationals living outside their political borders; this participation can reach toxic levels or assume corrosive forms in the modalities of money for certain political figures, nationalist propaganda, and weapons, although it can be restricted to the more benign activities of lobbying and fund-raising for humanitarian undertakings.¹¹⁰

The Eritrean diaspora played a major role during the armed struggle, particularly the EPLF effectively used diaspora as a means of financial and material support. Hirt also argues due to the EPLF's international isolation the front was financially mainly dependent on exiled Eritreans, who fled into exile from the atrocities of the Ethiopian regime.¹¹¹ Accordingly, the front started to designate the existing nationalist organization in diaspora, especially Eritreans for National Liberation in America and Eritreans for Liberation in Europe, both associations raised substantial funds for the war effort. Hirt argues by 1980, the EPLF had become as a transnational organization encompassing central political body, a military apparatus, and mass-associations across the world. The arrangement of festivals and other events was an important instrument for creating cultural symbols and consolidating the links between the exiles and the EPLF. In 1989, the EPLF substituted the mass-organizations with supposedly apolitical community organizations, the so-called "*mahbere-koms*"¹¹² However, Khalid Koser argues it was done to limit their political influence on the emerging state.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Zlatko Skrbis, *Long-distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities*. (Research in Migration and Ethnic Relations Series). Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1999; 201.

¹¹¹ Hirt, "The Eritrean Diaspora: Savior or Gravedigger of the Regime? 11.

¹¹² Nicole Hirt, "The Eritrean diaspora and its impact on regime stability: Responses to UN sanctions", available at <http://afraf.oxfordjournals.org/content/114/454/115.full#fn-38> site accessed 25 February 2016.

¹¹³ Khalid Koser, *New African Diasporas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 113.

It is estimated up to one million Eritreans had been displaced from their territory during the thirty-year Struggle for Independence (1961–1991). The majority became refugees in neighboring Sudan, from where many have not yet returned. This chapter mainly focused on Eritrean refugees in Europe. Nadjé Al-Ali and Richard Black states, there is no precise data on the size of the Eritrean populations in European countries, mainly because they were registered upon arrival as ‘Ethiopians’ rather than ‘Eritreans’.¹¹⁴

Post-2001 Diaspora and Structural Transformation

Due to both the disappointing outcome of the war with Ethiopia that ended in 2000 and the postponement of implementing the Constitution, some group of Eritreans both from inside and outside the country voiced their concern. Hirt writes, the diaspora was as disillusioned as the high ranking government officials, (who later came to be known as the Group-15) and the flourishing private newspapers.¹¹⁵ Internally, the government easily controlled the mass-unrest via imprisonment and liquidation. However, in the diaspora the situation was otherwise, opposition grew. Koser argues, it has not been possible for the state to use the same political pressure over diaspora nationals, as it does to those inside the country.¹¹⁶ He further argues, there is a notable contrast between the lack of public criticism of the government inside Eritrea and the quite open debate that take place within communities outside of Eritrea. Khalid has wrongly assumed that, diaspora Eritreans using their freedom abroad can influence the government to make political concessions. Diaspora based opposition groups persistent efforts and demonstrations failed to bear democratic fruit, neither the G-15 members or jailed journalists are yet to be freed.

The government has effectively been ‘milking’ the diaspora irrespective of their nationality with the 2 percent income tax levied on all Eritreans abroad.¹¹⁷ Eritrean embassies around the world have been keeping a record of the exact amounts every Eritrean has paid since Eritrea’s independence.

¹¹⁴ Al-Ali, Nadjé et al., The limits to ‘transnationalism’: Bosnian and Eritrean refugees in Europe as emerging transnational communities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (Vol. 24 No. 4 July 2001 pp. 578–600), 583.

¹¹⁵ Hirt, “The Eritrean Diaspora: Savior or Gravedigger of the Regime? 13.

¹¹⁶ Koser, *New African Diasporas*, 117.

¹¹⁷ Hirt, “The Eritrean Diaspora: Savior or Gravedigger of the Regime?14.

Anti and Pro-GoE Groups

Koser argues that, there has been political difference within Eritrea and in the diaspora which are merged around three main foundations.¹¹⁸ First, there are those supporters of ELF, an organization which started the armed struggle, however, it was effectively replaced by EPLF in 1981.¹¹⁹

As a second factor Koser states, the remarkable sense of unity, though he mentions some tensions along ethnic lines. Regional mistrust exists among the Tigrigna speaking ethnic group, which is traditionally divided into three provinces namely Hamassien, Seraye and Akeleguzay. The mistrust is more visible in the diaspora.

The third factor, due to the conflict with Ethiopia successful propaganda of the government created a sense of victimhood by the much larger, more powerful and internationally supported neighbor. However, Hirt describes Koser's description of sense of unity as a 'fiction' and something long-gone.¹²⁰ Hirt wrote her research paper in 2013 ten years after Koser's paper. One can easily understand why Koser come up with optimistic conclusions, as during those days that was the overarching reality that Koser capitalized.

However, today the political landscape of Eritrean diaspora has been completely transformed. Hirt claims, today the Eritrean diaspora is divided into four main groups:

1. "Permanent exiles" (mostly ELF veterans), who did not return to Eritrea after liberation due to fears of persecution.
2. Former EPLF/PFDJ supporters abroad who became dissidents and are now in a "second exile".
3. Exiled (former) members of the present government and the large group of youths, who left the country illegally as draft deserters, who can be called the "new exiles".
4. A group without – or with only loose – political affiliations that is now well-integrated in the host country.¹²¹

Opposition activities or former government supporters, get condemned by government supporters as 'traitors' when they voice their criticism, face social isolation and marginalization.

¹¹⁸ Khalid Koser, *Mobilizing New African Diasporas: An Eritrean Case Study*, in: *New African Diasporas*, 11–123. 122.

¹¹⁹ Negash, *Eritrea and Ethiopia: The Federal Experience*, 160.

¹²⁰ Hirt, "The Eritrean Diaspora: Savior or Gravedigger of the Regime?" 17.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

This is often used as a weapon of social control to silence people from standing against the government. Hence, there is a sense of fear in the diaspora, thousands of kilometers away from Eritrea, many Eritreans are still not yet free. Due to this peculiar phenomena, the case of Eritrean diaspora transnationalism has attracted the attentions of scores of researchers and analysts, over the last few years.¹²²

¹²² This chapter has helped me to answer the central research questions, as without understanding the complex nature of Eritrean diaspora, it is difficult to grasp the root-causes for the inter-communal tension in the Eritrean diaspora community.

CHAPTER FIVE

UNDERSTANDING MIGRATION AND INTERGRATION

Introduction

This chapter presents, discussion on causes and consequences of Eritrean migration influx and their choice of Norway as a final destination, in light of push and pull migrations models. I have also examined homeland development in the context of integration.

I had interviewed eight Eritrean informants and two Norwegians. Informant 1 and 6 are in their sixties, considered as part of the first and second phase of refugees, while the rest of my informants' were part of the third phase, who arrived in Norway over the last ten years. Informant 3 and 4 are women, while the rest were men. Informant 3,4,5 are university students. Informant 3,4 and 7 are in their twenties, while informant 2 and 5 are in their thirties.

Migration 'for a Better Life'

Most journeys start with a dream and one step. Likewise, Eritrean refugees journey to Europe starts with a dream, a dream of a better life, freedom, dignity and prosperity. Some of my informants decided to leave Eritrea hoping one day to made it either to Europe or America. Some others especially minors followed others' footsteps and ended up in Norway more by accident than by plan. Informant 5 is one such example, even though a University graduate, he was unprepared on the idea of where to seek asylum and neither did he knew about Asylum seeking procedures. He elaborates on this point:

When I first arrived in Europe, I came to Norway to see my sister. Some people encouraged me to seek asylum her, others suggested to move to England. Up to that point, I never knew about the procedures of seeking asylum, I was just thinking I could live and work anywhere without seeking asylum.¹²³

He was unprepared, his main obsession was to reach Europe. For some of my informants it appeared as a luxury choosing a country of asylum in Europe, while living in the refugee camps. But this mindset changes the moment they reach European borders, either through Italy or Greece. Coming from a country with a system of lifetime forced military conscription at meager payment, it is an unfathomable privilege.¹²⁴ However, not for everyone, for informant 7, who came to Europe

¹²³ Interview with informant 5 on 01 December 2016.

¹²⁴ The Economist, "National service in Eritrea: Miserable and useless", available at <http://www.economist.com/blogs/baobab/2014/03/national-service-eritrea> site accessed 10 March 2016.

via the Mediterranean Sea, Italy was never his ultimate destination. He made all efforts to avoid finger printing in the pursuit of continuing his journey to the rich North. On this point informant 7 stated:

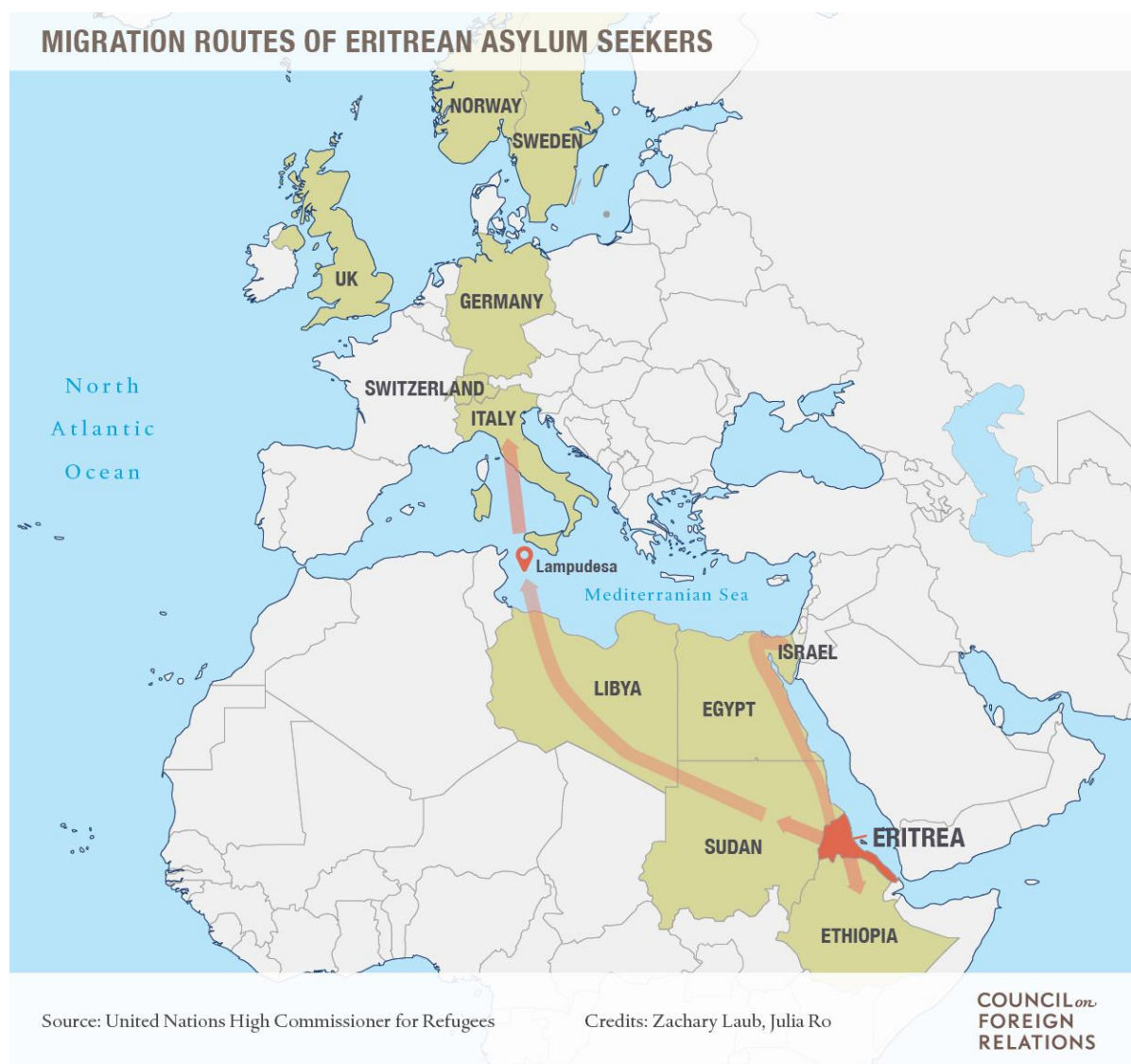
I wasn't risking my life and spending thousands of dollars just to come to Italy, and a day later to sleep on the streets. It was only in the hope of getting either to Norway, if not to the other Scandinavian countries. I knew while in Africa how bad the conditions in Italy were, though much better than staying in the refugee camp, but Italy is not worse the risk.¹²⁵

Informant 7 already made-up his mind about his destination country, while in Ethiopia. On the internet he discovered about the Norwegian Welfare System, and felt for people like him, who starts from zero, Norway would be an ideal place. He also got further information from his aunt, who lives in the country. In addition, the shorter asylum case processing time especially for Eritreans was attractive. He dreamt of continuing his study, even if it would mean struggling economically, education was worth anything for him. However, he knew beforehand about the zero tuition fee in the Norwegian higher academic institutions. A family reunion with his wife he left behind, was something he considered, and found that the Norwegian immigration process was conducive to make his dream a reality.

My informant's decision shows how refugees are particularly interested in finding the right place for their particular needs. There are also other factors at play, especially the role of established family members appeared as a solid ground in making the final decision. Almost all of my informants had established network of family members, before their arrival, something that helped them integrate faster.

¹²⁵ Interview with informant 7 on 15 February 2016.

Map 1: Source Council on Foreign Relations¹²⁶



Causes of Migration

People move from one place to another for a variety of different reasons. There are multiple types of global migration phenomena, among them; forced, reluctant and voluntary. The involuntary relocations of Africans to the America's during era of slave trade was a form of forced migration. People's voluntary decision to migrate lured by the better economic prospect abroad, is regarded

¹²⁶ Zachary Laub, "Authoritarianism in Eritrea and the Migrant Crisis" available at <http://www.cfr.org/eritrea/authoritarianism-eritrea-migrant-crisis/p37239>; site visited 03 May 2016.

voluntary. In the case of reluctant migration, there must be an unfavorable condition that force individuals to reluctantly relocate without their desire.¹²⁷

There is no active war in Eritrea, but thousands are leaving the country every month. In this case, I find it more fitting to frame the recent migration phenomena under reluctant migration, by examining with the push and pull migration models. But, if one doesn't observe the push factors involved carefully, assuming Eritreans as economic migrants is quite possible.

Like active war, serious human rights violations generate reluctant migration (refugees) creating the condition of a 'push factor'. In the case of informant 2, 5 and 7, it was the indefinite military service which drove them to leave their home country. Informant 3 and 4 are pulled to immigrate by family reunion. However, the pull and push factors are closely interrelated, as we will see them in the case of Eritrean refugees.

Pull Factor

Security: The political stability and harmony in the Norwegian society attracted informant 2 to seek asylum and start a new life. He escaped from the national military service, and a secure life in Norway was more than anything for him. The stability of the country and its relatively few people attracted him most. He states on this point:

While I was in Eritrea, I used to hear about the peaceful nature of the Scandinavian countries in general and Norway in particular. As living in peaceful environment was the most important thing for me, I decided to apply for asylum in Norway.¹²⁸

Prior to his coming to Norway, he was given protection in Germany on political grounds, but he opted Norway. From informant 2, we learn that good economy is not always a sufficient condition for refugees in deciding to relocate, he was also in search of inner tranquility.

Family Reunion and Resettlement: Through the process of family reunification, children and spouses could legally immigrate to Norway. By the United Nations Resettlement Program, some refugees have been resettled to Norway directly from the refugee camps. However, none of my informants were beneficiaries of this program, but informant 3 and 4 came as part of family reunion.

¹²⁷ National Geography, "What is Human Migration", available at <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/09/g68/migrationguidestudent.pdf>; site accessed 09 April 2016.

¹²⁸ Interview with informant 2 on 15 November 2015.

Both of them haven't made the decision to come to Norway themselves, and both found it difficult integrating in the Norwegian society. Feeling socially excluded and lonely informant 4 plans to return to Africa. She talks about her experience on the conflict between her expectations and reality:

When I knew I was coming to Norway, I just imagined to find all the things that I used to see on Hollywood movies, but it was far from that. I still couldn't adopt to the Norwegian life style. But, there are many other good things like freedom and educational opportunities.¹²⁹

Using the opportunity of free higher education in Norway, she is studying at the university with a goal of returning to Africa in an effort to contribute something towards the development of the continent. It was interesting that she never mentioned Eritrea but insisted anywhere in Africa. She feels less optimistic about going back to Eritrea any time soon, for her to contribute her part in its development endeavors. She stressed on the improvement of human rights in the country for her to consider going back home. She was not part of the military service herself, as she came to Norway as a teenager to join her parents. But, she witnessed the forceful conscription of young people from the streets of her neighborhood, and this has left her with a disturbing memory.

She is not a refugee in Norway, which means she is allowed go back to Eritrea if she wants to. Nonetheless, she has no desire of going back. This is one such example how the push and pull factors are closely interlinked. But, she stressed on her plan of going back anywhere in Africa after finishing her study; this could be an ideal example of a reverse migration phenomena.

Economic Opportunities: Many Eritreans could spend as much as 10,000 US dollars to reach Norway either via the Mediterranean Sea or Greece. The money is either paid by family members or borrowed from close relatives or friends. This financial burden preoccupies them with paying back their debts and eventually helping fellow family members back home.

Informants 7 came to Norway through the Mediterranean Sea and the prospect of good economic opportunity in Norway was an important factor in his decision. His immediate concern was helping his family back home, whom he left in a state of desperate economic situation. He hoped that the high-income and good standard of living in Norway could make his dream come true.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Interview with informant 4 on 30 December 2015.

¹³⁰ Interview with informant 7.

Push Factor

Insecurity: UN investigative committee on the human rights situation in Eritrea describes the country as ruled by fear than by the rule of law.¹³¹ This deplorable state of human rights situation forced informant 2, 5 and 7 to leave the country. When talking about the lack of freedom, each one of them stated lack of different aspects of freedom, which closely affected their life. Informant 2 talked more about the lack of freedom of speech as he left the country around 2002, one year after the government closed all the private newspapers. Informant 5 talked about the lack of freedom of religion, as he belongs to the now barred Pentecostal church, where members are subject to imprisonment if caught worshipping in house churches. Informant 7 emphasized the lack of freedom of movement, that led him to abandon his dream of opening small business. These are fundamental human rights and their absence naturally create a perfect condition for a push factor in deciding to leave a country.

Some of my informants have experienced imprisonment, others were simply scared of facing the same fate at some point. Some had seen close family members disappear by security agents. This sense of insecurity and vulnerability by the lack of the rule of law, pushed them to seek a better secured life abroad. Such experiences are traumatic, eventually forcing them to leave the country before facing the same destiny. On this point informant 7 states:

When I was in college, security agents took away some of my colleagues simply for asking critical questions to the administration. And no one heard of them ever since. From that moment on, I was so scared if I was going to be the next person. Eventually, I started contemplating to leave the country before it was too late.¹³²

Indefinite National Service: Eritrea has a system of national military service, initially it was meant for a year and half, when it started 1994. But, after the end of the war with Ethiopia, the government abandoned a demobilization program and instead launched operation Warsay Yikalo forcing all conscripts to continue their service indefinitely. Informants 2, 5 and 7 were members of the national service. Informant 5 served in the military for five years at meager payment getting equivalent of \$15 a month. This state of hopelessness forced him to seek refuge in the Sudan. He states on this point:

National service program is not peculiar for us; it is also practiced by other countries. However, ours is unique once you get in, there is no way out. How could someone accept

¹³¹ BBC, "Eritrea ruled by fear, not law, UN says", available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33047544>; site accessed 08 April 2016.

¹³² Interview with informant 7.

a situation like that, it is slavery in disguise. As an adult instead of me taking care of my aging parents, I was forced to be dependent on their financial assistance to meet my basic needs, nothing could be more humiliating than this.¹³³

This state of endless national service made them hopeless, restless and with no dream of enjoying a normal life, establishing their own family, living in freedom. Spending years in the military service means their productive years in life wasted in vain. The only hope left was realizing those dreams outside the country, consequently, precipitating massive-migration.

Family Disintegration: The state of indefinite national service meant economically impoverished young male and female can't get marry and those who marry can't live with their family leading a settled life. Children of national service conscript are mostly raised by single mothers, seeing their father on rare occasions, often once in a year. Therefore, the number of minors coming to Europe without a guardian in search of asylum is increasingly growing.

As more and more young people are desperately leaving the country, the prospect of marriage for young girls inside the country increasingly diminish. Especially girls are more pushed to immigrate by the poor prospect of marriage factor, as we can learn from informant 3. She told me many young girls are getting desperate in finding someone to marry.¹³⁴ As a result they too decide to leave the country in the hope of finding a suitable partner, which can guarantee them a secure life outside the country. The migration via marriage is done in two ways, either in Eritrea marrying with someone from the diaspora or in neighboring countries mainly Sudan and Ethiopia. Informants 3 further elaborates the prospect of marrying someone from the diaspora is much higher outside the country. As most of the young diaspora Eritrean refugees cannot enter Eritrea due to legal restrictions and possible reprisals by the government, they find it convenient to marry either in the Sudan, Ethiopia or in some cases in Uganda. Eventually, they rejoin later via family reunification.

¹³³ Interview with informant 5 on 1 December 2015.

¹³⁴ Interview with informant 3 on 20 December 2015.

Minors: In 2015 alone, over 5000 minors sought asylum in Norway, four fold to the previous year. Likewise, the number of Eritrean unaccompanied children was also recorded the highest.¹³⁵ The government was unprepared and overwhelmed with the huge inflow of minors seeking protection, as they demand more care than adults.

This huge arrival led the Norwegian authorities to send a delegation to Eritrea, headed by the former State Secretary in the ministry of Justice Jøran Kallemyr to talk about possible repatriation of failed asylum seekers.¹³⁶ After his trip to the capital Asmara, Kallemyr gave positive remarks about the country, arguing that comparing Eritrea with North Korea was unfair. However, he came under heavy criticism from Norwegian institutions that advocate refugee's rights.

Municipalities across Norway are working in protecting and integrating the refugees in the host society. EMbo Stavanger is part of the settlement program for unaccompanied refugee minors in Stavanger. EMbo consists of a child welfare institution, residential living/group homes and smaller apartments, where the unaccompanied minors get close follow-up according to their needs.

Hanne Visdal-Johnsen, professional development leader in EMbo Stavanger, stated that the institution sheltered 40 youth (in March 2016) out of whom 14 were from Eritrea. She states, some of the unique phenomena among Eritrean minors is the experience of imprisonment, torture, and hardship in Eritrea and on their way to Norway. This has affected their educational performance, with some suffering from complex trauma. The institution, however, provide care and gives counseling support, in an effort to help them maintain a healthy approach in life.¹³⁷

UNICEF's research in 2010, on the reasons for migration of unaccompanied children from Afghanistan concluded minors were sent by their family for economic reasons.¹³⁸ Consequently, some Norwegian medias citing UNICEF's report claimed, "minors in Norway were starving

¹³⁵ Karen Tjernshaugen, «Tok egentlig Norge imot flere asylsøkere enn andre europeiske land om man tar hensyn til folketall?» Aftenposten Newspaper; available at <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/politikk/Her-er-grafene-som-forklarer-asylaret-2015-8304909.html>; site accessed 18 March 2016.

¹³⁶ NRK, "Norway's Ministry of Justice satisfied with his trip to Eritrea" available at <http://www.madote.com/2015/06/norways-ministry-of-justice-satisfied.html>; site accessed 19 March 2016.

¹³⁷ Interview with Hanne Visdal-Johnsen 18 March 2016.

¹³⁸ UNICEF, "Children on the Move", available at http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/Book_children_on_the_move.pdf; site accessed 18 March 2016. 27.

themselves in an effort to save money to send to their families back home.”¹³⁹ The question is, is the UNICEF’s report relevant for Eritrean minors?

Informant 7 stated that, the state of indefinite national service in Eritrea affected minors enormously.¹⁴⁰ They often end up being raised by single mothers, enjoying little adult comfort and security. They lost a role-model both at a family and society level and often they desperately cross the border either to Ethiopia or Sudan alone. Therefore, the majority of minors in Norway come from refugee camps in Ethiopia and Sudan and many of them came to Europe through Libya crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

Visdal-Johnsen states that, some children under EMbo Stavanger including Eritreans send money to their parents in Eritrea.¹⁴¹ She understands their concern, and underscores it is within the law if they do so. She argued, “some unaccompanied minors send money, primarily to pay back smugglers and if they fail, their family could be threatened. Moreover, they came from a society with different social values, where social solidarity is much stronger than the one we have in Norway.”¹⁴²

The family in the homeland does not understand what it means to live in Norway. They often hear unrealistic stories like, everything is fantastic, you get a house, education, a car and money fall from the sky. However, the reality is otherwise. Refugees go through a very difficult process of integration, which is very demanding in itself. In addition, they have to go to school. In some cases, their families back home ask them money, and this pressure affects them psychologically. Visdal-Johnsen elaborates on this phenomena:

They feel bad, I am here living good life but my families are struggling; I am living a decent life but I have no enough money to send them. Some have enormous economic pressure. We as a society expect them to go to school, learn Norwegian, integrate, to have free time and friends. They are exposed to unprecedented pressure, unfortunately which is very tough. I admire them, as leading a normal life amidst all this pressure is a real challenge.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Tormud Strand, «Unge Afghanere Lever på Bønner og Pasta for å Sende Penger Hjem», available at <http://www.nrk.no/norge/unge-afghanere-lever-pa-bonner-og-pasta-for-a-sende-penger-hjem-1.12671560> Site accessed 18 March 2016.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with informant 7.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Hanne Visdal-Johnsen.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Remittance and Illegal Migration

Most of my informants came to Norway using either smugglers via the Mediterranean Sea or through airports often using fake passports. However, as legal channels of migration increasingly get tightened, the dream of reaching Europe through legal means has become a distant dream for many. Hence, the only available option remains using smugglers at great personal risk, that involves payment of thousands of US dollars. But, where does this money come from?

None of my respondents paid the money for smugglers themselves; they either acquired it from their family members or relatives often in western countries. However, smuggling involves several stages and methods. It starts from Eritrea, as the government impose shoot to kill policy for anyone attempting to leave the country illegally.¹⁴⁴ Informant 7 indicated that, in 2014 people could pay approximately from \$3000-4000 to smugglers to cross the border either to Ethiopia or to the Sudan.¹⁴⁵ When they safely reach in the refugee camps, diaspora remittance becomes their only source of survival.

Hopelessness in the camp generates anxiety, bleak future and eventually people attempt to secure money for further smuggling to reach Europe. Expenses are relatively less from Sudan than embarking from Ethiopia. Smugglers demand more than \$1500 only from Ethiopia to Sudan.¹⁴⁶ From there, other smugglers take over and demand an additional equal amount. From Libya, it costs around \$2000 to reach Europe. In this case, this life-threatening route could cost as much as \$10,000, an expenses that has to be paid by someone from the diaspora.

But, not all my informants had the privilege of getting financial assistance from close family members abroad. In this case, relatives back home could borrow the money for smugglers on condition of reimbursement after reaching the destination country. For the family, successful relocation of one of its members to the West offers economic guarantee. This phenomenon reaffirms the new economic migration theory that states, the decision to migrate is not individually based but on the family at large. In guaranteeing good economic future both for themselves and their family members back home, many prefer asylum countries with good future economic prospects.

¹⁴⁴ Aljazeera, "UN rebukes Eritrea 'shoot to kill' policy", available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/10/un-rebukes-eritrea-shoot-kill-policy-2013102594417854579.html> Site accessed 10 March 2016.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with informant 7.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Hostage and Ransom

The journey from Eritrea to Europe not only demands enormous financial costs, but the risk involved could be life threatening. The danger starts from Eritrea, due to existing shoot to kill policy. Crossing the border illegally could cost escapees their life. If caught, they could end up getting killed or serve years of imprisonment in the country's underground prisons, in what Amnesty International described "unimaginably atrocious conditions."¹⁴⁷ Those crossing the border to either Ethiopia or Sudan, may physically be safe but continue to live in limbo, without adequate food and a future to dream of.

Smugglers, through their underground agents in the camp, often lure desperate refugees into taking the dangerous journey to Europe, by feeding them false information. In the process, many become victims of human trafficking, they might be sold from one group to another, and have to pay thousands of dollars' in ransom. In this case, informant 7 elaborates his personal prison experience:

We were sold by the smuggler to the Islamic State groups in Libya, and they hold us hostage for four months. They tortured us (the men) badly, while raping our women in front of us. As a result of that experience, I am still suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.¹⁴⁸

One-woman detainee managed to sneak in a mobile phone, and eventually relatives in the diaspora were informed of their whereabouts. The group demanded \$3000 for the release of each hostage. My informant paid the money with the help of his aunt in Norway. She earlier covered his expenses from Ethiopia to Libya, remitting a similar amount.¹⁴⁹

Understanding Integration

Once asylum seekers get accepted as refugees, the Norwegian government provides them with an introduction program, where they learn language and social studies about the Norwegian society. If their request for asylum fails, they could end-up in limbo locked in reception shelters, in such cases, their role for homeland development is almost non-existent. Therefore, it is important to see homeland development in light of integration.

¹⁴⁷ BBC, "Eritrea: 10,000 political prisoners in awful conditions", available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22460836>; site accessed 11 March 2016.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Informant 7.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

As explained in the second chapter, some of my informants have lived in Norway for over 40 years, others as short as two years. Their understanding of integration greatly varies with the duration of their stay in the country. I have categorized Eritrean refugees in three phases as per their timing of departure from Eritrea, as explained in chapter four. There is no visible contradiction between the first and second phase of immigrants in their understanding of integration. However, there is a wide gap with the third phase.

Informants 1 and 6 belong to the first phase of refugees, and both feel closer with the Norwegians society than with the recently arriving refugees, although, harbor strong homeland sentiments. Both are active in the opposition movements, in removing the homeland government. Meanwhile, both of them were also active in the Norwegian politics, with informant 1 even serving as a member of city council, for the city of Stavanger for four years. Ever since he came to Norway, worked with Norwegians and he was deeply impressed by their honesty. He believes he knows their behavior well and took all their good moral values. He elaborates how much he has changed as a person after he became a member of parliament:

I worked as a member city council for the city of Stavanger for four years. I learned how to talk properly, how to respect others even if you don't agree with their opinion. Even if you distaste homosexuals but you respect them and discuss issues together. Therefore, I now consider my four years working experience as a member of parliament, just like someone, who graduates from four years of study at the University.¹⁵⁰

Provided the system of 'dictatorial' government changes in his native land, he aspires to share his experience to fellow compatriots especially on how a democratic system of government functions. He feels his homeland needs this culture badly in order to achieve sustainable development in the long-run. Schiller and Faist coined such an activity as 'social remittances' such as the transfer of human rights, gender equity, and democracy from North to South.¹⁵¹

However, in the context of an undemocratic government in Eritrea and as long as hostile policy exist towards diaspora nationals, immigrant's individual skills remain an untapped resource. Hence, the theory of circular migration in this case is only applicable to labor migrants. As long as the statuesque in the homeland remains unchanged, Eritrean diasporas are largely limited in survival remittance.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with informant 1 on 10 November 2015.

¹⁵¹ Faist and Schiller, *Migration, Development and Transnationalization*, 7.

There exists contradiction between the first and third generation immigrants in understanding integration. Informant 5 lived for seven years, feels not yet integrated as he finds it hard to fit in the Norwegian society.¹⁵² Informant 4 and 5 consider moving out of Norway for good, after finishing their study or after becoming naturalized Norwegian citizens, for that would enable them to stay outside Norway indefinitely. They plan to relocate either to Africa or United States. Both stated social exclusion as the main reason for leaving. Informant 5 who has lived in Norway for seven years, plans to move out of the country. He elaborates his experience on integration process as problematic:

I have learnt a lot about the Norwegian society at school; I learnt the language, but I don't feel I am integrated even after seven years. The main problem starts from the definition of the word integration itself, we differ in how we understand it. In our society we have a close relationship with our neighbors, here it is different. In the Norwegian culture it is quite normal to have a neighbor that you don't know. This is quite unusual for us; therefore, I could not see myself as part of the Norwegian society.¹⁵³

However, informant 1, feels more integrated and have more in common with Norwegians than with his fellow countrymen. He counter argues,

The perception of Norwegians as individualists is wrong, as they too socialize with their neighbors, perhaps it may not be to the same degree as we (Eritreans) know it in the context of our society, but judging all Norwegians in one blanket of 'individualism' is unfair.¹⁵⁴

We can learn from both examples how understanding of integration greatly varies between the first and third generation of refugees. The length of stay in Norway significantly influenced their sense of belongings in the host society. The lesson that we can draw from this comparison is that, integration could take time and failure in integration could lead to further migration in search of a new home elsewhere.

Integration and Homeland Development

Several migration scholars have surveyed the ways that migrants remit and how remittances impact on community development, economic structure and relations between genders and family members.¹⁵⁵ The study drew attention to migrants' economic contributions and perhaps increased policy makers' interest in migrants' role for the development of sending countries. But how is it

¹⁵² Interview with informant 5.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with informant 1.

¹⁵⁵ Faist and Schiller, Migration, Development and Transnationalization, 127.

possible without successful integration, especially in the labor market, for immigrants to play a vital role for homeland development? In this regard, integration and homeland development remains mutually inclusive. But, what exactly do we mean by integration?

Different scholars interpreted the concept of integration differently, Rinus Pennix defines the term as, ‘the process by which immigrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups.’¹⁵⁶ His definition is broad, and rightly so as different countries interpret integration differently. The Norwegian authorities’ definition of integration is more explicit. The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) defines integration stressing on the need of working and language skills:

The main objective of integration policy is that immigrants and their children shall use their resources and contribute to the Norwegian community. The keys to integration in Norwegian society include participating in working life and have a good knowledge of Norwegian.¹⁵⁷

No matter how we understand integration, its mutual benefit for sending and receiving country is undisputed. Integration failure has several ramifications. It leads to the social exclusion of immigrants, eventually becoming a burden for the host country. Consequently, without successful integration, migrants play a limited role for the homeland. Without sustaining themselves economically, their ability to remit to the homeland remains minimal. The more immigrants successfully integrate with the society, the more likely are they to contribute for the homeland, with financial and social remittance, as I would discuss in the next chapter.

However, the path for integration is not smooth for everyone, especially for failed asylum seekers from Eritrea. It could mean a life on hold, locked indefinitely in reception shelters. The Norwegian government has no repatriation agreement with the GoE, and UNHCR strongly opposes deportation of failed Eritrea asylum seekers.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Rinus Penninx, “Integration: The Role of Communities, Institutions, and the State”, available at <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/integration-role-communities-institutions-and-state>; site accessed 25 March 2016.

¹⁵⁷ IMMDI, “Integrering”, available at <http://www.imdi.no/om-integrering-i-norge/>; site visited 11 March 2016.

¹⁵⁸ UNHCR, “2UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines For Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum Seekers from Eritrea” available at http://www.unhcr.nl/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/UNHCR_Eligibility_Guidelines_for_Assessing_the_Internatio.pdf; site accessed 09 April 2016.

Yemane Teferi, a failed Eritrean asylum seeker in Norway died in January 2016 after living almost for 20 years in asylum shelters.¹⁵⁹ The majority Eritrean asylum seekers get protection, but those who do not, like Yemane end up in a limbo. His death, attracted both Norwegian and International media's attention that covered extensively his plight and tragic death. He told to the Norwegian newspaper Verdens Gang(VG); "let alone helping my family back home, I am a dead man walking, living without any hope."¹⁶⁰ His brother in Eritrea expressed, how Yemane felt humiliated for not helping them. He pointed out, Yemane distanced himself from his family back home, calling them only on rare occasions.¹⁶¹

The state of failed asylum seekers inexorably Yamane summarized with one statement, "If I die now, I lose nothing, because I own nothing."¹⁶² His death might have deeply affected his family, however, neither sending nor receiving country benefited from his grueling life in limbo.

Transnationalism

Valentina Mazzucato notes that, "studies on migration and development singly focus on one-way flows: what migrants do for the home country. However, there are also flows that go in the other direction, from home country to receiving country. These flows are usually ignored by migration and development studies".¹⁶³ As Mazzucato's well observation denotes academic literature weighted more focus on the role of migrants in the development of home countries, paying little attention on the 'two-way flow', neglecting migrants influence to host countries.

Transnationalism was devised as a concept in the early 1990s to bring these two research fields to bear on each other. It was noted that migrant realities could only be understood by taking the linkages between home and host countries and the simultaneity of flows with which these linkages are produced and sustained into consideration.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Eirik Linaker Berglund and Frank Haugsbø, «Bodde 24 år på mottak - nå er han død», VG Newspaper; available at <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/asyl-debatten/bodde-24-aar-paa-mottak-naa-er-han-doed/a/23593033/>; site accessed 11 March 2016.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Interview with SBS Radio Australia, the interview was done in Tigrigna in 15 January 2016.

¹⁶² Eirik Linaker Berglund and Frank Haugsbø, «Bodde 24 år på mottak - nå er han død».

¹⁶³ Valentina Mazzucato, "Simultaneity and Networks in Transnational Migration: Lessons Learned from an SMS Methodology. University of Amsterdam", available at <http://essays.ssrc.org/acrossborders/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/ch5.pdf>; site accessed 14 March 2016.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

From my fieldwork homeland affairs or state of close family members profoundly influenced my informant's daily life in Norway. The experience of informant 7 perfectly exemplifies how 'simultaneity' affects migrant's engagement with the homeland and its impact on integration with the host country. He had lived in Norway for two years; and from the start he faced a lot of challenges. His experience of seeing the death and torture of his fellow countrymen in Libya, profoundly affected him psychologically, suffering from PTSD.¹⁶⁵ In addition, his wife and sister were refugees in Ethiopia depending on his remittance for survival. His other sister too escaped to the Sudan with her husband and two children. To make matters worse, he also heard of his father's imprisonment in Eritrea, who was the only bread winner for the family and no one heard of him ever since. His older brother too got detained accused of attempting to leave the country illegally, and in prison he developed a mental illness. Amidst all these tragedies, my informant had to deal with his own PTSD. He felt better after receiving medical assistance, but his path for integration was proven to be difficult. He elaborates on this point:

When I go to the language school my body was in the classroom but my mind was absent. I often flash back to Africa. I couldn't concentrate well to run my daily life and this greatly derailed my integration.¹⁶⁶

Such episodes are particularly not uncommon among the newly arrived refugees, often impede them in integration. As I discussed in chapter three, individual immigrants' role as survival mechanism for remaining family members back home in the context of Eritrean refugees is evident. The conflict of adjusting two places and cultures is very demanding for recently arrived refugees (*perhaps in the range of ten years.*)

The first generation had lived in Norway for over forty years, and brought most of their close family members to either Norway or other western countries. Even though, they were politically active against homeland government, unlike the third generation they faced much less financial burden. Informant 1 and 6 stated that, most of their family members have left the country, and feel less financially burdened in helping relatives back home. This shows how transnationalism is stronger in newly arrived refugees than other immigrant groups. In this case, that the more family members one helps to resettle to the west, the less financial burden he/she might encounter over the long-term.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with informant 7.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

Globalization and Virtual Family

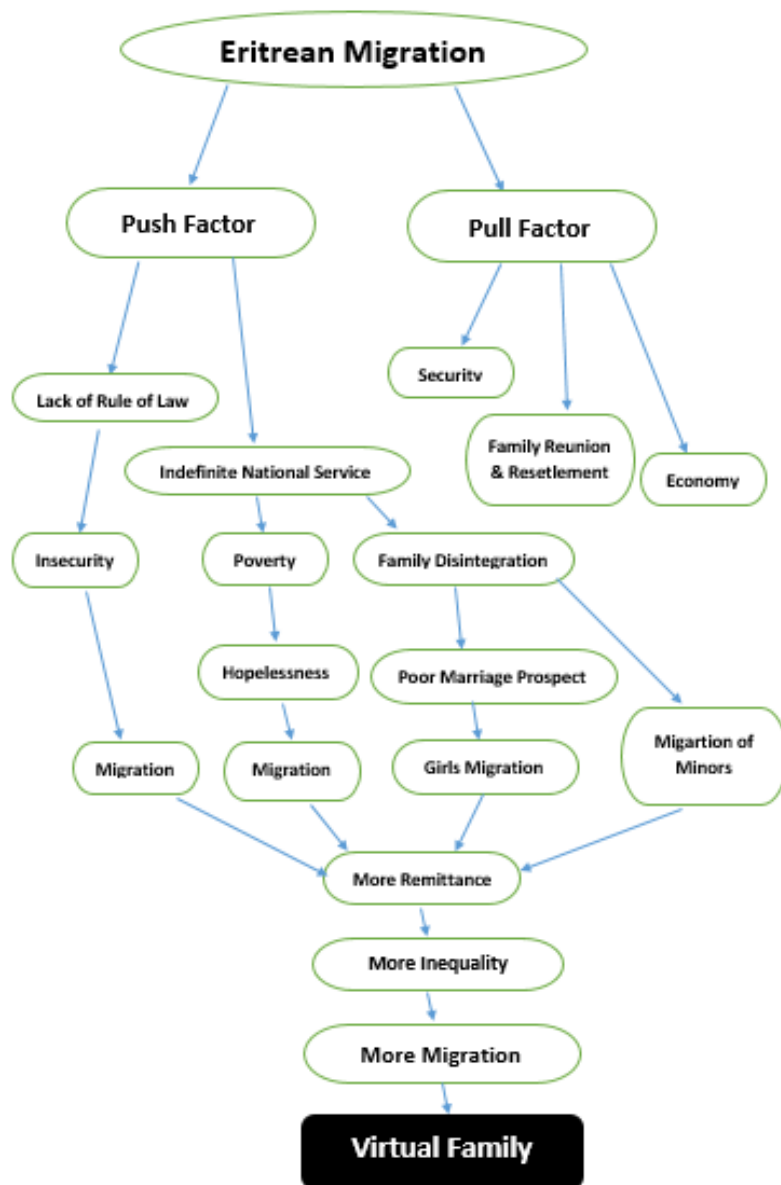
As more and more Eritreans are leaving the country in droves, some of my informants' entire family members are scattered throughout the world creating what I have come to refer to as a sense of 'virtual family'. Family disintegration has greatly diminished their contacts with the homeland, and as they are mostly linking with fellow family members in the West or other parts of the world via social medias such as Viber, Skype and Facebook.

Informant 5 states that, all his family members fled into exile and now his contact with his relatives inside the country is greatly reduced after he found home virtually on the web. They have created a family group on Viber and Facebook, where they update each other on current family affairs. I found this both as an interesting, equally alarming phenomena. Because, in the homeland development debate, migrants' link with fellow family members has been highlighted as one of the most significant elements. If connection with the homeland totally cease at one stage, it could signal the end of remittance, perhaps complete disengagements. In the absence of family connection, what factors will motivate the diaspora to play an active role for the development of the country? Informant 5 responded to this particular question, with cautious optimism, provided the political atmosphere in the country improves for the better, he hopes to return one day as an investor.¹⁶⁷

Virtual family is one of the most important findings of the project, attempts were made to find other relevant literature on this subject, but was unsuccessful.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

Figure 2: My illustration on the evolution of virtual family in the Eritrean migration phenomena



CHAPTER SIX

UNDERTANDING HOMELAND DEVELOPMENT

Before I started the interview with informant 6, he asked me about the title of my thesis. When he learnt that it had to do with the development of the homeland, he was stunned and replied ‘what development are you talking about?’¹⁶⁸ I experienced similar sentiments from the other informants’ too, assuming there is ‘no development’ currently undergoing in Eritrea that one can really talk about.

Introduction

This chapter covers homeland development mainly in terms of economic and political aspects. In the first part, the role of Eritrean refugee’s financial contribution and the challenges involved is presented. The second part discusses the political activism by Eritrean refugees/immigrants in Stavanger in removing the homeland government and how this lead to intra-community divisions. The finding for the first and second part is based on the interviews with Eritreans and Norwegian informants.

Homeland Development: What development?

Most of my informants are preoccupied with the deteriorating political development in Eritrea and the huge refugee influx to Europe. These phenomena have affected them financially and psychologically. They hear the death of a close family member either when drowning in the Mediterranean Sea or when killed by the Islamists in Libya.¹⁶⁹ In this context, my writing about homeland development could not make any sense to them. What they see is a tragedy unfolding in front of their own eyes, mass-migration triggered by the deplorable state of socio-economic crisis.

However, there is a wide disagreement on homeland affairs between the old and new generation. Some of the young informants I interviewed; see their role as a means of survival for their family members back home, while the old generation see themselves as agents of democratic change. They are active in organizing demonstrations to pressure the government in Eritrea in making political reforms and freeing political prisoners. The youth are predominantly absent from demonstrations organized often by the old generation and consequently the old generation blame

¹⁶⁸ Interview with informant 6 on 10 January 2016.

¹⁶⁹ Louisa Loveluck, “86 Eritrean migrants 'kidnapped by Isil' in Libya;” available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11655543/86-Eritrean-migrants-kidnapped-by-Isil-in-Libya.html>; site accessed on 10 April 2016.

the youth, as opportunists and unpatriotic. The first generation feels betrayed by the young ones. In this regard informant 1 states:

Our generation has paid a lot of sacrifices to achieve independence, unfortunately the dream of establishing a democratic government has been hijacked. Now we are getting old, even if we want to do something, we can't without the young by our side. But where are all the young people claiming asylum in Europe in speaking out against the injustice they suffered. This young generation is just self-seeking; I don't think they have really understood what is at stake, the future belongs to them not to us.¹⁷⁰

The immediate priority of the young refugees I interviewed, was in integrating and finding a job, thereby to help family members back home. Informant 7 is one of the young generation and he is politically active. But profoundly discouraged by the ineffectiveness of diaspora-based opposition in bringing change in the homeland. What I have observed was a sense of hopelessness among both generations. It is this state of frustration that is exacerbating the accusation and counter-accusation between the two generations. The big question is however, who is responsible for the failure and disintegration of the opposition block?

Democracy and Development

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines democracy as “a form of government in which people choose leaders by voting”.¹⁷¹ In this case, leaders are chosen by people, and they are expected to serve their electorates interest. If they fail to do so, they risk being voted-out in the next term. Democracy empowers electorates by allowing them to guide their future destiny. In this case, development endeavors without engaging the masses at the grass-roots level is most likely to fail. No matter how top-down approach of development seem to work for the short-term, its long-term sustainability is unreliable. In this case, democracy and development remains mutually inclusive.

In the absence of democracy in Eritrea, my informants agree they could not effectively participate in the development endeavors of their country. Currently they see their contribution mainly on the significance of remittance ‘as a survival mechanism’ to family members back home. However, for a long-term sustainable development, informant 1 argues, establishment of an elected government is a precondition.¹⁷² In this case, being politically active is seen as a way of facilitating long-term sustainable development. Provided, democratic government is put in place, informant 5

¹⁷⁰ Interview with informant 1.

¹⁷¹ Merriam Webster, «Democracy» available at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/democracy>; site accessed 11 April 2016.

¹⁷² Interview with informant 1.

intends to return back as an investors and informant 1 as an agent of social remittance, sharing his experience on democratic governance. However, informant 2 has no intention of returning, even if there would be a democratic government in place. The reason he stated, “I am going to feel a foreigner; I don’t think I will be reintegrating with the society I grew up.”¹⁷³

For long-term sustainable development, some of my informants engage in political activism. But not all of them have the same understanding on this issue, as some of my informants are not politically active. Those who are active participate in demonstrations condemning the GoE, attend meetings and fund-raise for the opposition medias. They also mobilize fund for international demonstrations, often by buying airline tickets to individuals willing to participate. Most of them do so to fulfill their moral obligation, as “silence in the face of injustice amount to dreadfulness”.¹⁷⁴ Informant 6 has lived for over forty years in Norway and elaborates on the change of culture in the Eritrean society:

During the Hailesilase and Mengstu regime, people were speaking up and the regimes were admitting their faults. But nowadays, whenever you see evil, it become a norm to remain silent. In my opinion, such an attitude reflects some people were only obsessed with achieving independence, that is why they don’t care now, whatever tragedy happens they just keep a blind eye.¹⁷⁵

The polarized state of the Eritrean diaspora discouraged many in resorting to remain silent, as I would discuss later in the chapter. Informant 4 is a young woman, who tried to engage first on the side of the government, then changed her position after increasingly getting frustrated by the worsening human rights situation in Eritrea. She tried to play an active role with the opposition before she gave-up. When she explained why she distanced herself from both groups, she states:

Lack of unity made the situation more complicated. People are divided, and often settle disagreements with insults and infighting. The old generation only inherited us their antagonism and narrow-mindedness. The Young People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (YPFDJ)¹⁷⁶ too inherited this poison of divide and rule, everywhere you go, it is just disgusting.¹⁷⁷

The lack of tolerance and respect for people with different political views is mentioned as one of the main factors for the division in the opposition block, leading many to distance themselves

¹⁷³ Interview with informant 2.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with informant 6.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ YPFDJ a diaspora based youth branch of the only political party PFDJ in Eritrea. Mostly made up of youth born and raised in the diaspora from parents supporting the government in Eritrea.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with informants 4 on 30 December 2016.

from actively participating. Respect and tolerance are the main pillars in democracy, and informant 5, who is passive from political activism, accuse the opposition block of his reluctance to join them ‘they too are behaving in undemocratic fashion’.¹⁷⁸

Divided Community

Two major groups, anti and pro-GoE actively engage in homeland politics abhorring hostile relationship. Supporters of the GoE once in a year invite a cultural troupe from Eritrea, named ‘BDHO’ and spend night-out partying. Anti-GoE activists see such events as a means of mobilizing financial and moral support to the sustenance of ‘a dictatorial government’. For this reason, they work hard for the cancelation of such concerts. Initially, they disseminate information highlighting the nature of the concert to town halls owners and hotel managers, arguing money raised from the concert would ultimately serve to strengthen a dictatorial government in Eritrea. Doing so, could implicate them in indirectly funding a government condemned by the international community, for its poor human rights records, ultimately damaging their own reputation.¹⁷⁹

Most often they succeed, if such efforts fail to bear fruit, the next step becomes demonstrating in front of the planned concert hall, something hotel managers want to avoid. At this stage, often confrontation erupts between the two groups and in some instances, things go out of control, demanding police intervention.¹⁸⁰

Anti-homeland government groups use the local media effectively in raising awareness about the situation in the homeland. Pro-GoE, seem better organized than the anti-GoE groups, pro-GoE are however, often absent from the local media. Even when they come under a barrage of criticism, they refuse to divulge information to journalists.¹⁸¹ Anti-GoE, usage of the local media consequently won them ‘sympathy’ from some local Norwegian politicians and other individual actors, with some even playing a prominent in the awareness campaign. One such example is, Finn Våge, chairperson for the Eritrea committee (Eritrekomiteen). Våge states that, the committee’s main objective is, “to inform and raise awareness about the plight of Eritreans both in Norway and

¹⁷⁸ Interview with informant 5.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with informants 1.

¹⁸⁰ Gundersen, «Ap vil nekte kommunal utleie til eritreiske foreninger».

¹⁸¹ Interview with informant 1.

Eritrea, to expose the network of support for Eritrean government and to support Eritreans working for democratic change through peaceful means.”¹⁸²

Våge writes critical articles for a local newspaper *Stavanger Aftenblad*, exposing the implicit support by some members of the community to the GoE. In one of his articles, he criticizes pro-GoE groups for inviting a propaganda rock band from Eritrea:

Eritrea's dictator sends this year a Christmas present for Eritrean youth in Stavanger! The gift is a rock band from Asmara packed with nice music. They will celebrate a dictatorship that UN accuses of committing crimes against humanity. These Eritrean associations invitation of the band, reaffirm their support for a violent dictatorship. The leaders of these associations are well aware that it would be "suicidal" to admit that they are in favor of a dictator. Therefore, they only deny in public their support to PFDJ regime, the only legal party in Eritrea.¹⁸³

He also urged local politicians to pay a particular attention to the gross human rights violations in Eritrea by bringing data from the 2015 report by the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights on Eritrea¹⁸⁴ by stating:

Opposition is being shattered and the youth forced into a modern-day slavery by having to undergo military service or forced labor indefinitely for 5,10 or 15 years! UN accuses the country of systematic and deliberate violations like torture, sexual slavery, forced labor and deliberate-murder. It concluded that Eritrea is governed not by law but by fear.¹⁸⁵

All of my informants agree, unless the military service ends unconditionally the youth will continue to escape and the country's socio-economic state will continue to get worse. This state of abject poverty will exacerbate mass-migration towards the West, and the burden on diaspora Eritreans would upsurge accordingly, as refugees eventually would depend on their remittance to survive along the way. This 'hopeless' situation creates a polarized atmosphere among the pro and anti-GoE groups. Due to divisions of political opinion, diaspora Eritreans reach as far as breaking all social ties, including close family members. One of my informant elaborates on this point:

Over the last 24 years, our society has been spoiled. The major organs that sustained our society for generations are now broken. This is mainly due to lack of education on the part

¹⁸² Interview with Finn Våge 15 December 2016.

¹⁸³ Finn Våge, "Diktator Lurer Stavanger Politikere" *Stavanger Aftenbladet* Newspaper; available at <http://www.aftenbladet.no/meninger/debatt/Diktatur-lurer-Stavangers-politikere-3828304.html>; site visited 20 February 2016. (My translation from Norwegian).

¹⁸⁴ The Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea was established by the Human Rights Council through resolution 26/24 of 27 June 2014 to investigate all alleged violations of human rights in Eritrea, as outlined in the reports of the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Eritrea.

¹⁸⁵ Finn Våge, "Diktator Lurer Stavanger Politikere".

of the youth, therefore, an uneducated society's contribution in the enhancement of democratic culture is limited. Due to lack of knowledge, we see today pro and anti-GoE individuals break social ties. I personally experienced it, people whom I had good relationship with, when I spoke out against the regime in the media, they right away distanced themselves from me. I don't blame them; it is just because they don't know any better.¹⁸⁶

The tension between these two groups impeded the creation of a solid diaspora organization that could have influenced the GoE to change its policies and eventually mobilizing resources to the benefit of homeland communities. The role of Eritrean immigrants as development agent is greatly derailed by the lack of political participation and hostile approach by the GoE. For any meaningful development endeavor, in this case, democracy remains a prerequisite. As long as the current stalemate persists, diaspora Eritreans will continue to resort in resettling fellow family members to the west. Perhaps this may even more exacerbate exiting intra-community tension in the host country, while gradually diminishing diaspora's contact with the homeland.

Two Percent (2%), Diaspora Tax

The GoE has a system of levying a 2% income tax to its diaspora citizens living abroad, often when renewing passports or ID cards, a scheme heavily criticized by the UN and some Western governments.¹⁸⁷ In December 2011, a UN security council resolution 2023 (2011), called on Eritrea to “cease using extortion, threats of violence, fraud and other illicit means to collect taxes outside of Eritrea from its nationals or other individuals of Eritrean descent”.¹⁸⁸ In a letter to the UN committee in July 2014¹⁸⁹ the GoE stated that the Proclamation specifically targets only Eritrean citizens in the diaspora, not citizens of other countries of Eritrean decent.

The Eritrean National Assembly enacted the 2 percent Rehabilitation and Recovery Tax Proclamation in 1994.¹⁹⁰ The legislation was enacted to “provide some cushion to the hefty annual

¹⁸⁶ Interview with informant 2.

¹⁸⁷ Sam Jones, “Diaspora tax for Eritreans living in UK investigated by Metropolitan police”, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jun/09/eritrea-diaspora-tax-uk-investigated-metropolitan-police>; site accessed 18 March 2016.

¹⁸⁸ United Nations, “Security Council: Resolution 2023 (2011)” available at [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2023\(2011\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2023(2011)); site accessed on 18 March 2016.
15 March 2016.

¹⁸⁹ United Nations, “Letter dated 10 October 2014 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council”, available at http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2014_727.pdf; site accessed 15 March 2016.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

budgetary bills that the Government continues to shoulder to date to support the war disabled and the families of martyrs. Some of my informants strongly oppose this system of extortion and lobby to the Norwegian government to prevent Eritreans in Norway from exploitation by the government in Asmara. As Eritrea doesn't have embassy in Norway, one has to refer to the Embassy in Stockholm for any consular services.

However, informant 1 claims the embassy has clandestine agents in major cities across Norway, engaged mainly in facilitating the transfer of the 2% income tax to the GoE.¹⁹¹ Eritrean governments' extortion of 2% tax is a source of tension in the diaspora community. Supporters argue, the money is meant to serve for the development endeavors of the homeland, while opponents counter-argue, such assistance could only further delay democratic change by strengthening a dictatorial government. In this case, homeland development is subject to disagreement, eventually becoming a source of intra-community conflict.

The Eritrean diaspora organized two major demonstrations in 2014 and 2015 in Geneva and New York respectively, calling for UN to impose sanctions on the GoE for its human rights violations and demanded the complete halt of the 2% tax.¹⁹² Their effort was paid-off as the UN in 2015 decided to extend the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea, to investigate if crimes against humanity is committed.

Survival Remittance

Remittance is one of the most important influences refugees and other migrants can make towards countries of origin. There is growing evidence that remittances are crucial to the existence of communities in many developing countries, including many which have suffered conflict and produced refugees.¹⁹³ Remittances are transfers of money from individuals in one country to an individual in another country. The majority of such transactions involve small amounts of money.

¹⁹¹ Interview with informant 1.

¹⁹² Fatma Naib, "Diaspora Eritreans rally against human rights abuses"; available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/diaspora-eritreans-rally-human-rights-abuses-150626011455681.html>; site visited 18 March 2016.

¹⁹³ Nicholas Van Hear, "Refugee Diasporas, Remittances, Development, and conflict"; available at <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugee-diasporas-remittances-development-and-conflict> site visited 15 March 2016.

However, for households in receiving countries remittance may represent an important share of their budget.¹⁹⁴

The war with Ethiopia and its aftermath deprived Eritrea of its key economic role as the external trading outlet for the Ethiopian hinterland. In addition, a very large section of the productive population remains tied up in compulsory military service or so-called national development programs (Wefri Warsay Yikealo). This has affected food production, exacerbating shortages, in the meantime, major international aid agencies close down offices in the country.¹⁹⁵

But Eritrea's economy has not buckled. With increasing isolation, it continues a policy of economic self-sufficiency. Defying the logic of the so-called Washington Consensus, it restricted free enterprise and tightened state control in all aspects of its economy. Exasperated by Eritrea's difficult policy environment, most of the international donors and non-governmental organizations have left.

Since 2003, the Eritrean government is not disclosing official economic data. However, it is clear that remittances are fundamental to the current Eritrean economy. Sally Healy elaborated on David Styan's argument, that Eritrea was unique in both the scale and the level of control the government exercised over remittances. Eritrea's exports are officially worth only \$20 million (prior 2007) while imports are \$700 million. There are adequate reserves to cover just two weeks of imports. This highlights the crucial importance of maintaining the flow of remittances, upon which all aspects of the economy, including government finances, depend.¹⁹⁶

Healy argues, the GoE is able to extract extra remittances from diaspora when 'smuggling' their relatives out, and they then have to pump more remittance in order to avoid elderly dependents being arrested or starved. Meanwhile, the GoE knows that those youths who do 'escape' will themselves begin remitting, simultaneously increasing financial flows into the country, while decreasing demographic and political pressures at home.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Carlos Vargas-Silva, "Migration and Development"; available at <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/policy-primers/migration-and-development>; site visited 18 March 2016.

¹⁹⁵ Sally Healy, "Eritrea's Economic Survival: Summary record of a conference held on 20 April 2007. The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2007; 5, available at <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Africa/200407eritrea.pdf>; site visited 15 March 2016.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 21.

From my fieldwork, I have noticed newly arrived refugees seem more overburdened with remittance. Meanwhile, they don't have permanent jobs or solid income. The first generation refugees that I have interviewed, brought earlier most of their immediate family members either to Norway or to other western countries.

With increasing numbers of Eritreans leaving the country becoming the norm, some UN estimates put the number at high as 5000 every month, the financial burden for refugees in the west dramatically increase. Informant 7, who arrived in the last two years, elaborates the daunting challenge of remitting every month:

Whatever penny I get from the Norwegian government, I have to remit it to my siblings in the Sudan, Ethiopia and to my parents in Eritrea. I couldn't eat what I want and buy cloths. If I could, it must be from Fretex.¹⁹⁸ I live for them; their survival has become my ultimate objective. So far, I remitted more than one hundred thousand Norwegian kroner in just under two years, mostly to Ethiopia and Sudan.¹⁹⁹

Unlike economic migrants' remittance, which often directly reach homeland societies, refugees remittance more often is destined to neighboring countries, where large group of refugees' are sheltered. Despite their poor economic standing, refugees' are more likely to engage in persistent remittance than economic migrants, largely due to the precarious nature of fellow family members in protracted refugee camps. However, it is neighboring countries that harvest the benefits from the injection of hard-currency. As a result, refugees' role in the homeland development discourse via remittance seem to hold no water. Even if they do so, it is only meant to keep family members survive. Likewise, large part of the remittance from Eritrean refugees in Norway is spent on smuggling and survival purposes.

Remittance Transaction

On November 3rd, 2015 the GoE announced issuing a new currency note and that Eritreans had only six-weeks to surrender old currencies in exchange for new one (Nakfa) at a 1:1 ratio.²⁰⁰ Officially and semi-officially four main reasons were given, to fight the black market, control inflation, to increase currency circulation and to fight contraband and corruption. However, different writers and commentators gave varied explanations, on why the GoE made such a decision.

¹⁹⁸ A place where second-hand clothes are sold at a low meagre price.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with informant 7.

²⁰⁰ Shabait, "Legal Tender Nakfa Currency Notes Regulations"; available at <http://shabait.com/news/local-news/20720-2015-11-05-12-26-32> site visited 17 March 2016.

International money transfer agencies such as Western Union, MoneyGram, Forex etc. are non-existent in the country, pushing diaspora Eritreans to use other informal means. My informants often remit via individuals living in the West. They transfer the money to an individual's bank account, and his/her agent inside the country receive it in Nakfa, at a black market exchange rate. This is done in clandestine; as the government severely punish individuals engaged in the exchange of hard-currency in the black market. Possessing undeclared a penny of dollar alone could send someone to indefinite imprisonment.²⁰¹ Informant 6 also stated that, the closed nature of Eritrea's economy to the outside world made it even more difficult for the government from earning benefits of hard currency from its own citizens abroad.²⁰²

However, the change of currency made it very difficult for diaspora Eritreans to remit even via the unofficial channels, as the government imposed restrictions in the amount of money people could withdraw from the banks. In this point informant 7 elaborates, on the challenges he faced in remitting after the change of currency:

It took me four months to remit to my mother. She was so frustrated and complained if I had abandoned her, as she couldn't understand how remittance transfer has been complicated. The government is not helping us, they first kicked us out and now denying us from helping our family.²⁰³

In the course of writing this thesis the statuesque remained unchanged, increasingly frustrating my informants after finding it difficult to support their family members. Even if they manage to send, it was almost at less than half amount to the previous exchange rate. Before the change of currency, one dollar was exchanged at black market rate ranging from 40 up to 45 Nakfa, but from January 2016, it went down as low as 20 Nakfa creating an additional financial burden to the diaspora.

Remittance and Social Conflict

World Bank in its 2015 report on Eritrea states that, the last household survey and Participatory Poverty Assessment undertaken in 2003, estimated that around two-thirds of the people were living below the poverty line.²⁰⁴ This state of abject poverty created family members' dependent on persistent remittance from relatives abroad. This has also contributed in the breakdown of social

²⁰¹ Interview with informant 2.

²⁰² Interview with informant 6.

²⁰³ Informant interview 7.

²⁰⁴ The World Bank, "Economy"; available at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/eritrea/overview>; site visited March 18, 2016.

relations among close family members. In some cases, it even led into marriage breakdown. When family members struggle economically back home, diaspora couples are obliged to support them financially. If the couple's economic standing is pitiable, it may leave them in frustration and depression. In this case, informant 3 explains:

Both mine and my husband's parents are in Eritrea. They depend on our financial support to survive. However, this has seriously weakened us financially, and the hardest part is that, there is no end in sight to this impasse. We are forced to take this burden as part of our life now. I would have liked to continue my education but who's going to feed my families. It is a very difficult situation.²⁰⁵

Part of Eritreans social culture is the norm of helping family and vulnerable close relatives, but when these expectations are not met, it often results in social relations breakdown. Some of my informants have helped family members and relatives to reach Europe by covering the partial or full expenses of smuggling. However, they often end up without ever hearing a message of gratitude afterwards. Normally there is no financial reimbursement among fellow family members or relatives, but there is a high degree of expectation for recognition and reassurance of social status. However, this is not without disappointment, as informant 6 elaborates:

Many lie to get financial support, they tell us we are imprisoned, tortured and when you help them to come here, they never say even thank you, they even distance themselves from you. How could you help others again?²⁰⁶

Lobbying

As discussed in chapter four, diaspora homeland engagement is not always development oriented, at times diaspora groups could also be sources of conflict and instability in the homeland by funding warring parties. For instance, during the period of Eritrea's armed struggle for independence (1961-1991), the diaspora played a key role as the main source of funding for the guerilla fighters, who were rarely receiving help either from the Western or Eastern bloc.

The role of individual diaspora actors was crucial for the successful conclusion of the war and Emnetu Tesfay, is one such example. He came to Norway in the mid 1970's, spent most his life actively engaging in mobilizing resources, fundraising, exporting technological knowhow, lobbying, writing project proposals and creating awareness campaign on the 'noble cause' of Eritrea's armed struggle, often by writing articles in local newspapers. He also travelled around the country giving speeches in schools and colleges campuses. Consequently, he played a significant

²⁰⁵ Interview with informants 3 on 20 November 2015.

²⁰⁶ Interview with informant 6.

role in winning sympathy from the Norwegian public in general, and from politicians in the left in particular.

In the 1970's there were not many Eritreans in Norway, and Norwegians knew little about Eritrea. In less than a year after he came to Norway, he wrote an article on the National Newspaper *Dagbladet* entitled “*The Norwegian Connection*,” an article that brought Norwegian’s attention and eventual sympathy on the conflict in Eritrea. In the article he argued that, Eritreans were forced to wage war against Ethiopia, due to the decision made by the Norwegian delegations’ recommendation for the eventual unification of Eritrea with Ethiopia.²⁰⁷

By resolution 289 A(IV), the General Assembly, adopted on 17 November 1950, among other things, the establishment of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea to ascertain more fully the wishes of the inhabitants of Eritrea and the means of promoting their future welfare.²⁰⁸ The UN sent its own mission of enquiry (with Burma, Guatemala, Norway, Pakistan and South Africa as its members) to Eritrea in the same year. The mission, which stayed in Eritrea from 9 February to 9 April, failed to reach a common accord in presenting their findings to the General Assembly, despite the fact that, a majority of the Eritrean people clearly wanted complete independence.²⁰⁹

Reading Tesfay’s article, many Norwegians felt guilty and saw the problems in Eritrea as their own fault. Leftist political parties became the first and main sympathizers of Eritrea’s cause for independence, even though slowly other parties joined later. Norwegian politicians also used Tesfay’s arguments in convincing their electorates.²¹⁰

After this episode, Tesfay learnt that, he could do anything in mobilizing further support for the guerilla fighters, and he was even tempted not to continue studying or start working. He was also undeterred by his poor state of health, as he was suffering from chronic diabetes, falling down at times, while fundraising on the street. His doctor once advised him to take care of his health and his response was staggering:

²⁰⁷ Interview with Emnetu Tesfay, 15 January 2016.

²⁰⁸ United Nations Archive, “United Nations Commission for Eritrea”, available at https://archives.un.org/sites/archives.un.org/files/files/Finding%20Aids/2015_Finding_Aids/AG-048.pdf; site visited 22 March 2016.

²⁰⁹ Insideeritrea.com, “Eritrea General Facts”; available at <http://www.insideeritrea.com/history/history2.htm> March 22, 2016.

²¹⁰ Interview with Tesfay.

‘I told him that my friends are dying in the fighting, and likewise I see this work as my own fight. I will not stop because of my poor health issues. The doctor was surprised and told me ‘it is only when you are healthy, that you can help others’.²¹¹

Everywhere he goes, he tells people about his country, its history, culture and society. Even after he started working, he used to spend 60% of his time working on projects related to the struggle in Eritrea. He studied several projects that could be useful for the armed struggle. Among the successful projects was the establishment of satellite transmission link between the liberated area in Eritrea and the outside world. He wrote, about this project on his personal website (*emnetu.com*):

The link which provided telephone, telefax and telex lines facilitated easy and quick communication with the outside world. It surprised very many among others, Col. Mengistu Hailemariam who is believed to have angrily said “...they have even telephone link.” The BBC by itself was surprised when live information was supplied to it from the battle ground during the demise of the Ethiopian army in Afabet.²¹²

This is one example of how individual commitment for homeland development; could at times bear more effective result than an organization with dysfunctional bureaucratic structure. Tesfay also acknowledges, had he not been working individually, he might have accomplished nothing.²¹³

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Emnetu Tesfay, “Biggest of all & Appreciators and Impeders”; available at <http://www.emnetu.com/category/biggest-of-all-appreciators-and-impeders/>; site visited 22 March 2016.

²¹³ Interview with informant Tesfay.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the summary of the main results of the research. The findings are presented in a categorical form namely; theoretical, political and economic dimensions. In the end, implications of migration in relations to pull factor and reverse migration phenomenon are summarized.

Theoretical Dimension

There is now an increasing recognition that migration, both internal and international, can signify a major route out of poverty. Studies suggest that migration can have substantial positive impacts on livelihoods and well-being, though it also carries costs and risks that may be borne excessively by the poor, and may surge inequality if the risks are not well managed. Migration is considered as an unavoidable global phenomenon that needs to be better understood and managed. However, the relationship between migration and development has so far been described as ‘unsettled.’

As the field of migration development is getting more focus recently; equally association of migration with security is growing bigger than with development. The relationship between migration and development, particularly with conflict, is far less studied.

The migration development debate has had a habit of shifting back and forth over the last forty years. This has produced, a wide theoretical gap in understanding the exact relationship between migration and development. Migration development optimists recently began to argue citing the benefits of remittance for homeland development, and conscious of this fact, homeland governments increasingly started to engage their diaspora by launching dual citizenship scheme and investment opportunities. The World Bank and African Development Bank also recognize diaspora as major homeland development actors, due to the huge diaspora remittance flow, often outweighing official development aid.

Economic Dimension

In the case of the Eritrean diaspora in Norway, my findings indicate that, a large part of their remittance is directed towards Ethiopia and Sudan, helping or smuggling fellow countrymen living in those countries as refugees. Remittance sent to Eritrea is often survival than investment oriented.

As there are no official international financial transactions in the country, no reliable remittance data is available. Due to these challenges, diaspora Eritreans resort to informal remittance channels. Thus, the government gets minuscule hard currency. Accordingly, classifying Eritrean diaspora as development actors remain unfitting or the concept of homeland development needs redefinition. In the Eritrean diaspora context, development could mean helping fellow family members resettle in the West, where immediate vertical economic uplift is expected. Consequently, economic status of family members in the homeland could change dramatically. Towards this end, tens of thousands of dollars are spent in smuggling, depleting diaspora's financial resource. This endless state of dependence, at times leads to social conflict, in the worst case scenario family disintegration.

More remittance flow creates more inequality, prompting others to look to the West as the only escape route out of poverty. In this case, I am on the pessimistic view on the migration development debate; perhaps Eritrean exodus could serve as one worst case migration pessimism scenario. Migration leads to more migration; more brain drain leads to less democratization, eventually less development.

In today's Eritrea, everybody is escaping by paying thousands of dollars to smugglers, including underage children, many of whom ended up seeking asylum in a country as far as Norway.

Political Dimension

During my research, I had encountered some theoretical challenges in understanding migration development, in the context of unstable or undemocratic homeland government. Much of my discussion focused on political activism of diaspora Eritreans in achieving democratic change. Some of my informants were even puzzled by my research topic, finding it highly irrelevant with the current state of affairs in the country. They underscored that, there could not be any talk of development without democracy, accountability, and the rule of law. Homeland political issues are however divisive, polarizing, leaving pro and anti-homeland government groups in a constant state of confrontation. What most of my Norwegian informants asked was why Eritrean diaspora in Norway support, a dictator accused of serious human rights violations by the international community. This is an interesting question and a potential topic for future master students or researchers.

The Wall Street Journal referred to Eritrea as one of the "world's fastest-emptying nations." Many writers described the state of Eritrean migration as 'exodos'. The question is, why are they leaving? What is at stake? Two major factors are pushing Eritreans to leave the country; the institutionalization of indefinite military service and the lack of the rule of law. Eritrea's national service is unique in its kind once you get in, you hardly get out, and this at a bare minimum wage. My informants described it as "slavery in disguise".

National service created poverty and disintegrated families, discouraging many young men and women from establishing families of their own. Children are condemned to grow-up with single mothers, often struggling economically to make ends meet, as husbands are conscripts. This state of hopelessness leads young, old, married, single, and underage children into seeing exile as the only viable option for a dignified life. In today's Eritrea, people could not dream of a future. This state of affairs resulted in migration exodus, with an epic-proportion, in the modern history. Endless mass-military conscription is the main source of mass-migration, creating not the classical condition of brain drain but *Population Drain*, adding a new buzz word in the migration phenomenon discourse.

The lack of the rule of law in the country is also another contributory factor, leaving inhabitants to live in a constant state of fear. The Eritrean government has not implemented a constitution ratified in 1997, and for two decades the country is run by the president's malevolent leadership. No election, no free press. Individuals survival depends at the sheer mercy of corrupt military leaders, who enjoy unlimited power at their disposal to disappear any individual deemed 'a threat' to the government. People do not know prisoner's whereabouts. If family members try to trace them, they risk ending up in incarceration themselves. This state of general lawlessness created a sense of profound fear and prompted many to escape the country in saving their life before it is too late. Families are disintegrated throughout the world and some of my informants have created symbolic-home on the social media. They often meet with fellow family members scattered throughout the world by opening a family-group page in skype, Facebook and Viber. I have called this new phenomenon the-*Virtual Family*, an area that I strongly recommend for further research.

Pull Factors and Reverse Migration

When it comes to Eritrea refugees' choice of coming to Norway, I discovered three pull factors namely, security, family reunion(resettlement) and good economic prospects. The experience of

insecurity in Eritrea attracts some of my informants' the physical security in Norway as a major pull actor. Others, however, never made the decision to immigrate themselves but, were forced by the migration of close family member, joining them via legal means or were directly resettled from refugee camps. For others, Norway's good economic standing, the welfare system, in particular, attracted them most.

Most of the Eritrean immigrants, who came as refugees in the early period have a positive attitude about integration and social life satisfaction. However, new comers are constantly struggling to integrate and fit in the Norwegian society. Some are even opting to move elsewhere in the hope of discovering a meaningful life. In this case, integration takes time and not all refugees coming to Norway will eventually stay. Especially those with higher education are more prone to immigrate, as they see better job prospects abroad. However, those with less education are more likely to stay, lacking the confidence to adventure in starting a new life somewhere else.

Final Reflections

In the end, I would like to stress on the fact that, the state of migration from Eritrea is having a disturbing short and long-term consequence for the country and by enlarge to the international community. The consistent denial by the leadership in Eritrea on the leading cause of migration, denotes there is no desire to stop the exodus. For some of my informants, this is 'a deliberate, systematic policy of the government to empty the nation of its young people', who would unlikely return any time soon. This mass surveillance, conscription and mass-migration has largely enabled for the government to survive in power unimpeded, without facing massive popular uprising.

Regrettably, the migration development optimism is not closely relevant to the state of Eritrea. But I have come to the conclusion that, had it not been massive migration that drained the youth and the educated class, the government might have not survived this far. Young people are agents of change, but in today's Eritrea, instead of looking inward, increasingly they are looking outward for a better life, and only few make noise against the government from European and American capitals. Many Eritrean democracy activists innocently believe they could overthrow a dictatorial government unhinged in relinquishing power via demonstrations or exerting external pressure. I am firmly convinced; no exertion of external pressure would succumb the regime into making substantial domestic reform.

Twenty-five years after its liberation from Ethiopia, Eritrea fought with all of its neighbors, internationally isolated, it earned the name “North Korea of Africa”. Disillusioned Eritreans are voting with their foot crossing the border to Ethiopia, Sudan and Djibouti living as destitute refugees. The UN states that, five thousand leave on a monthly basis, a frightening statistic for a country of less than five million. The country is facing an existential threat. It needs a savior, but as long as Eritreans continue to see migration as a solution, they will continue to be saved in the Mediterranean Sea. If the current tide of migration, continues unabated, what is at stake is not Brain Drain but *Population Drain*. (END)

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Informants Interview

Interview with informant 1 on 10 November 2015

Interview with informant 2 on 15 November 2015

Interview with informant 3 on 20 November 2015

Interview with informant 4 on 30 December 2015

Interview with informant 5 on 01 December 2016

Interview with informant 6 on 10 January 2016

Interview with informant 7 on 15 February 2016

Interview with informant Emnetu Tesfay 15 January 2016.

Interview with informant Finn Våge 15 December 2016.

Interview with informant Hanne Visdal-Johnsen 18 March 2016.

Interview Consent

Project Title: Migration Development: on the case of Eritrean immigrants in Norway Background and Purpose

This master's research paper is self-funded and deals on migration and development, on the case of Eritrean immigrants in Norway. The main purpose of the research is to understand how Eritrean immigrants describe their role for homeland development. How do they contribute or participate in the affairs of their homeland.

This project is for the partial fulfillment of my master's study in the School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger.

What does participation in the project imply?

You are chosen to participate in my study and feel free to decline my request.

The main source of the data for this study would be interviews with Eritrean refugees living in Norway and Norwegian actors working with refugees.

You could be asked about your personal life story i.e how you came to Norway, on integration with the Norwegian society, your social relationship with fellow Eritreans immigrants in Norway, and your ties with your homeland.

What will happen to the information about you?

The data gathered via interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The data will be used as a source material for the above-mentioned project.

The Personal data will be treated confidentially. Besides me, no one will have access to the data. All information will be stored in my personal computer at home, which is password protected. In addition, codenames will be used in storing the data. The list of names will be separately kept from the data.

I will use tape recorder and hand written notes while the interview is underway. The duration of the interview could approximately take from thirty minutes to one hour, but the interviewee could stop at any given time.

After the successful completion of the project, the master thesis will be delivered to the School of Mission and Theology in May 2016. There will not be any mention of name, time, age and place of residence of respondents. Your personal information will be kept anonymous. Participants will not get recognition in the publication of the paper.

Voluntary-participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any given time withdraw your consent without stating any reason.

Consent for participation in the study

☐

I have received information about the project and I am willing to participate.

Place and date

signature

Interview Guide:

Semi-structured Interview

1. Can you tell me about your background i.e. how you grew up?
2. How did you come to Norway? *Follow up questions.... for example, what were the challenges along the way?*
3. What did you know about Norway before you came and where did you get the information?
4. Have you made personal decision to come to Norway, if yes, why?
5. How was your experience in integrating with the Norwegian society? *Follow up questions, have you faced any challenges? If yes, what were the challenges and do you feel you have overcome those challenges?*
6. Do you feel that you have changed as a person after you came to Norway, if yes, in what regard?
7. How do you describe your relationship with your fellow compatriots in Norway? *Follow up questions, how often do you meet and Why?*
8. How do you maintain your relationship with your relatives in Eritrea, how often do you visit and in what ways do you contact them?
9. How do you describe your role for homeland-development? *Follow up question, how often do you send money? Where do you send the money? Who are the recipients? Does remittance affect your economic wellbeing?*
10. Do you have any plans of going back to Eritrea in the future? If yes why, if no why not?

NB. This is a semi-structured interview; it does not mean every informant was asked the same question.